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**“Economics is political”: Preservice teachers, purpose, and the  
challenges of critical economics pedagogy**

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**“Economics is political”: Preservice teachers, purpose, and the  
challenges of critical economics pedagogy**

**by**

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## **Dedication**

To Margo. You were more than an inspiration; you were me when I couldn't be. You are my favorite and this has all been because of you.

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## **Abstract**

### **“Economics is political”: Preservice teachers, purpose, and the challenges of critical economics pedagogy**

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Economics education is an understudied discipline within social studies, yet the discipline of economics holds an outsized import in political decisions. Teachers are largely ill-prepared to teach economics as part of social studies, and students of economics report feeling disconnected from the traditional economic content. This qualitative case study explored the way that preservice teachers in an Urban Teaching program conceptualized the purpose of economics within social studies education, its role as part of their purpose for teaching, and how they implemented their understanding of the function of economics into their instructional decisions. Using a theoretical lens that merged critical pedagogy and transformative purpose within the disciplinary confines of economics, this study demonstrates several significant disjunctures between how economics is perceived to function and critical approaches to teaching and teaching social studies. In particular, economics was perceived to function in the present and for the purpose of social analysis, yet teaching was about social analysis, transformative classroom management, and praxis; and teaching social studies was about understanding the past, social analysis in the present

and critical action for the future. However, the study also revealed the potential of economics as part of a transformative purpose for teaching.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

<p>Tonight, as you eat, reflect if you can: there are children starving in the world, starving in numbers larger than the mind can easily hold, up in the big numbers where an error of a million here, a million there, can be forgiven. It may be uncomfortable for you to reflect upon this or it may not, but still, you will eat.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>American Gods</i>, Neil Gaiman</p>	<p>It's mostly a lot of blather about what we owe the Capitol. I know there must be more than they're telling us, an actual account of what happened during the rebellion. But I don't spend much time thinking about it. Whatever the truth is, I don't see how it will help me get food on the table</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>The Hunger Games</i>, Suzanne Collins</p>	<p>She went crazy, just crazy as a loon. And I just thought, well, no harm in that, I guess. I mean, nobody never asked us women what we thought or how we think things around here should be run or what the laws oughta be but those same somebodys who do all the thinking for poor souls who ain't got the means to fight them that make the laws, well, them lawmakers never cared none what it meant for us poor souls scraping by. Just scraping by is what we ever done.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Forgetting the Alamo, Or, Blood Memory</i>, Emma Pérez</p>
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In the world of fiction, we encounter an economic narrative. Stories that illustrate great disparities in wealth. Stories of privation and privilege. Stories of history and hunger. Stories of supremacy and subsistence. It is accepted that economics is part of the human condition; the fundamental challenges of scarcity and distribution and production and consumption, and that these challenges will have costs beyond those measured in dollars or euros. Economic stories often involve withdrawals from our collective humanity, debiting the material conditions for life from some to credit others with unimaginable luxuries. We are compelled by these stories in fiction – indeed, we feel their raw ache as

we read – yet we teach and learn economics as if it is not a story, but a science to be conducted in a lab. Clean white lab coats, beakers and calculators; economists study the world like physicists, looking for universal laws. A Newtonian market designed to theorize the particular movements of individuals in predictable and malleable ways. This sanitized view of economics has filtered any humanity from the discipline. Enforcing a rigid, positivist worldview means that lives are but elements in an equation, poured from one beaker to the next, at the behest of the qualified few lab technicians who claim the expertise necessary to regulate human behavior.

To speak back to this view of economics is to assert that humans are agents in their own lives. That they can know the world, name it, and in so naming it can work towards equality and justice in the future. If economics is a story, it has heroes and villains. It has a past and a present. It has winners and losers. It has authors and characters. It is, in a word, narrative. As narrative, it has long served to enforce a neoliberal hegemony and oppress the many while rewarding the few. Moreover, economic education has been complicit in this oppression for too long. By teaching a static and descriptive discipline, economic education ignores the dynamism of the economic world and the potential for students to inscribe their story as part of a counter narrative. It is time to consider ways to know the world differently, to think about naming the world with this language of power, to seek ways to disrupt the dominant narrative, and to understand ways that humans collectively can transform economics into a tool of resistance.

<p>'I am wondering, me, in the equations of this U.S.A. type: the best good is each individual U.S.A. person's maximum pleasure? or it is the maximum pleasure for all the people?'</p> <p><i>Infinite Jest</i>, David Foster Wallace</p>	<p>The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much.</p> <p><i>Heart of Darkness</i>, Joseph Conrad</p>	<p>[F]or the Greater Good and the Greater Profit are not compatible aims, much to Father's chagrin.</p> <p><i>Life of Pi</i>, Yann Martel</p>
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## ECONOMICS AND THE DOMINANT NARRATIVE

Walstad and Watts (2015) report that approximately 58% of high school graduates take a one-semester course in economics, much less than American history or government (91 and 84 percent, respectively), but more than the 29% of students who take a stand-alone geography course. More students are taking economics courses in recent years (Walstad & Rebeck, 2012). The Council for Economic Education (2016) reports that while all states and Washington D.C. have economics standards, and 45 states are required to implement them, only 23 states require an economics course to be offered. Of these, 20 require students to take an economics course, and 16 states have some form of standardized testing of economic concepts. Also, a number of students will encounter economics when it is infused in other social studies courses (Buckles, Watts, & Schug, 1997), so “the question is not really *whether* economics will be taught” (Walstad & Watts, 2015, p. 327), but rather, *what* economics will be taught.

Freire (1993) asserts that “[t]o exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it” (p. 88), in a dialogic encounter with existence and others. The economic narrative, in its

present form, has long denied humans the opportunity to name and change their world, instead insisting on a world that can be known and named by mathematical calculations of markets that are value-free (Blanchard & Coléno, 2016; Brant, 2016). This narrative is guided by the tenets of what is known as the neoclassical approach to economics. The underlying assumption of this approach is that humans behave in a ‘rational’ manner (Ötsch & Kapeller, 2010), meaning that humans pursue their material self-interest ravenously (R. Miller, 1993), and thus calculations can be precisely made about what humans will do in the absence or presence of economic stimuli (Cameron & Astrid Siegmann, 2012). The field of economics maintains this neoclassical worldview at the expense of alternatives (Lee, 2004b, 2004a), and in doing so insulates the discipline from alternative conceptions of the world (Barone, 1991; Bresser-Pereira, 2012; Evensky, 2004; A. Freeman, 2010), and alternative ways to change it (Bendixen, 2010), whether those changes occur in the micro (Moorhouse, 2009) or the macro (Wight, 2009).

The economic narrative is also the language of power (Earle, Moran, & Ward-Perkins, 2016), where a select few ‘experts’ have the power “as the accepted spokespeople for society’s economic knowledge, to shape political goals and the means of achieving them” (Chapter 1., Section 1, para. 6). The neoclassical worldview immerses uncontested experts submerged in a neoclassical worldview and thus use their authority to promote free-markets at the expense of equality or other measures of social good (Wright-Maley & Davis, 2017b). Even when these assumptions prove to be false, as in the case of the recent financial crisis (Peters, Besley, & Paraskeva, 2015), and the technocratic rationality of economists fail, the norms of the discipline are not questioned,

and in many ways they are further enshrined into economic policy (Arestis, Charles, & Fontana, 2015).

Economics education perpetuates the neoclassical view of economics and, most perniciously, fails to question the underlying assumptions that the view is predicated upon, thus maintaining its hegemony. While economics is an understudied discipline (S. Miller & VanFossen, 2008), it is becoming more prevalent in the coursework of students across the United States (Council for Economic Education, 2016; Walstad & Watts, 2015), and is also embedded in other social studies disciplines such as history and geography (National Council for the Social Studies, 2010). Unfortunately, teachers are often ill-prepared to teach economics (Aske, 2003; Ayers, 2015, 2016; Joshi & Marri, 2006; Walstad, 2001), and thus may rely on textbooks and standards that enforce the neoclassical paradigm (Lee & Keen, 2004; Leet & Lopus, 2007; MacDonald & Siegfried, 2012; Siegfried & Krueger, 2010).

<p>I shared a vagrant optimism that some of us were making real progress, that we had taken an honest road, and that the best of us would inevitably make it over the top.</p> <p>At the same time, I shared a dark suspicion that the life we were leading was a lost cause, that we were all actors, kidding ourselves along on a senseless odyssey. It was the tension between these two poles -- a restless idealism on one hand and a sense of</p>	<p>The psychohistoric trend of a planet-full of people contains a huge inertia. To be changed it must be met with something possessing a similar inertia. Either as many people must be concerned, or if the number of people be relatively small, enormous time for change must be allowed. Do you understand?</p> <p><i>Foundation</i>, Issac Asimov</p>	<p>I think it's a heartless government that will let one baby be born owning a big piece of the country, the way I was born, and let another baby be born without owning anything. The least a government could do, it seems to me, is to divide things up fairly among the babies. Life is hard enough, without people having to worry themselves sick about money, too.</p> <p><i>God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater</i>, Kurt Vonnegut</p>
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<p>impending doom on the other -- that kept me going.</p> <p><i>The Rum Diary</i>, Hunter S. Thompson</p>		
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## ECONOMIC POSSIBILITIES

Economic scholars argue that this narrow conception of markets and human behavior can be altered (Graupe, 2012; Jo, Chester, & M. King, 2012). It can be used to name the world and be a tool for justice. Naming the world with economics means using the tools of economics to demonstrate the staggering level of inequality of wealth that continues to grow in the early twenty-first century (Piketty, 2015; Stiglitz, 2013). It means considering how that inequality functions to maintain white supremacy (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006; Wise, 2013), cultural superiority (Cookson, 2013; Wright & Tierney, 1994), and patriarchy (Berik, Rodgers, & Seguino, 2009; Feiner, 1994). It means describing the way that free-markets promote environmental destruction (Klein, 2014; Raworth, 2017), destabilize democracy (Klein, 2007; Perkins, 2007), and create global financial crises that imperil everyone but the architects of the financial bubbles (Lewis, 2014; Taibbi, 2010).

Seeing the world in this way provides an opportunity for economics education to act in response to these injustices. This calls for a transformation of the moral and ethical foundations for studying economics (Etzioni, 2010; Lutz & Lux, 1988) as well as a reconsideration of the purpose, methods, and epistemological foundations of the discipline (Brant, 2011; Gibson, 2011; Graupe, 2012; Leclerc, Ford, & Ford, 2009). It also means reshaping economics education to address issues of race (L. King & Finley,

2015; A. Vickery, Holmes, & Brown, 2015), gender (Feiner & Roberts, 1990; Powlick, 2009), and class (Freedman, 2008; Keen, 2011).

This type of inquiry into the world and the praxis that occurs as a result has been demonstrated in social studies education, however the vast majority of attempts have taken place within the disciplinary walls of history, and to a lesser extent geography (e.g. Catling & Martin, 2011; Gaudelli & Heilman, 2009; Helfenbein, 2006; Price, 2010; Schmidt, 2011). The “official curriculum” (Apple, 2004) in the discipline of history has been derided as Eurocentric (Noboa, 2012; Vasquez Heilig, A. Brown, & K. Brown, 2012), dismissive of non-White historical achievement (Candis, 2013; Journell, 2008), or colorblind (Guinier, 2004). Textbooks perpetuate white supremacist history even when including people of color in the narrative (Lintner, 2004; Zimmerman, 2004) by representing key figures as one-dimensional (Alridge, 2006) or by negating the structural factors involved in racial violence or to the resistance thereof (A. Brown & K. Brown, 2010). The racial dominant narrative in history has been very clearly exposed, which then provides teacher education the opportunity to offer a counter narrative, though curriculum studies and teacher education programs in general often remain as whitewashed as the standards and textbooks in K-12 settings (A. Brown & Au, 2014; K. Brown, 2011)

Similar analyses of the role of gender in the history curriculum have taken place. School structures and even classroom environments promote patriarchy (deMarris, 2000; Henry, 2010), therefore it is not surprising that history textbooks are largely devoid of women in general (Loewen, 2008), or they are included “whether or not their presence is relevant” (Noddings, 1992, p. 230). The inclusion that does exist largely binds women to

the home in ways that normalize whiteness, middle class lifestyles, and heterosexuality (Schmidt, 2012). While there are a number of articles that contain instructional approaches that attempt to address the lack of women in the curriculum, very few are critical of the patriarchal norm, and contain “no references to gender bias, feminism, patriarchy, or sexism . . . [and] the word ‘feminist’ appears twice but only in references” (Schmeichel, 2015, p. 15). Thus, it can be a challenge for teachers and teacher educators to disrupt a dominant narrative that ‘others’ women and continues to promote society’s emphasis on a male norm (Lorber, 2003).

If economics education is to follow in the footsteps of other social studies disciplines and surmount dominant narratives, name the injustices in the world, and take action to address them; research should attend to the purpose and pedagogy of teachers who engage economic concepts either directly or indirectly. This study attempts to address this need in several ways. First, this study stands in a gap of literature on critical economics education at the K-12 level, of which there are limited and incomplete examples in publication. Second, while there is literature that describes teacher purposes for teaching economics (to be discussed in the next chapter), the specific focus on the purpose of economics within a broader teacher preparation program that emphasizes challenging the dominant narrative is absent from the literature. Third, it offers opportunities to think about teachers’ development of critical consciousness in an unfamiliar subject, and how they attempt to negotiate their pedagogical content knowledge with their nascent understanding of critical pedagogy.



<p>'Cause kinfolk life is beautiful  And we ain't gotta die for them other men  And I refuse to kill another human being  In the name of a government  'Cause I don't study war no more  I don't hate the poor no more  Gettin' more ain't what's more  Only thing more is the love  So when you see me  Please greet me with a heart full  And a pound and a hug</p> <p>2100, Run the Jewels</p>	<p>I remember you was conflicted  Misusing your influence  Sometimes I did the same  Abusing my power, full of resentment  Resentment that turned into a deep depression  Found myself screaming in the hotel room  I didn't wanna self destruct  The evils of Lucy was all around me  So I went running for answers  Until I came home</p> <p><i>Mortal Man</i>, Kendrick Lamar</p>	<p>But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full.  Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry.  Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.  But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.  Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.</p> <p><i>Luke 6:24-25, 27, 30</i>, New American Standard Bible</p>
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## OVERVIEW OF CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This research draws on two significant bodies of research that are connected via the disciplinary tools of economics into a conceptual framework. The first component of the framework is grounded in the literature surrounding *critical pedagogy* (Apple, Au, & Gandin, 2009b). This includes the need to analyze society critically in order to better understand injustice and oppression, or *social analysis*. It includes an emphasis on teaching methods that deliberately contest oppressive power relationships, or *classroom practice*, and it emphasizes the goal of combining action and reflection into *praxis*.

The second component of the framework deals with literature surrounding *transformative purpose* (Dinkelman, 2009; Freire, 2005a; Hawley, 2010, 2012). Included

in this element are teachers' *practical theories* about teaching and the nature of knowledge, gleaned from their educational and life experiences, and the way that these theories inform their transformative dispositions. This also includes their *reflection* on their teaching, including reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983), and the way the reflective process can transform the teacher-student dynamic (Freire, 2005b). Lastly, it includes their ideals about whether teaching is about *transmission* of the status quo or *transformation* of the existing social system, and their explicit desire to foster a new social order (Counts, 2004; Stanley, 2005).

The final component of the conceptual framework is the linkage between these two bodies of literature via economics. Specifically, this addresses the way that teacher purpose manifests in a critical pedagogy for economics, and the way that critical pedagogy affects their conceptualization of the purpose of economics.

## **OVERVIEW OF STUDY DESIGN**

This study utilized a qualitative case study design. Case study is the “intensive study of a case” or “a *bounded* integrated system with working parts” (Glesne, 2011, p. 22). In this study, the case was made up of several undergraduate preservice teachers who are a part of an Urban Teaching program at a large, public university in the American southwest. These participants were purposefully selected because of their desire to attain certification in a program that is upfront about its transformative purpose and emphasis on critical pedagogy. Data was collected from interviews, professional development sessions, classroom observations, and participant-generated artifacts. Data was coded and

analyzed for emerging themes, which was shaped into a narrative text designed to answer questions about the role of economics in teacher purpose and critical pedagogy.

The research questions that frame this study address important questions with respect to economics education as well as gaps in the economics education literature.

Specifically, the research questions include the following:

1. How does content knowledge and previous experience with economics influence the way preservice teachers understand the function of economics within social studies education?
2. How do preservice teachers describe their purpose for teaching, and how does that impact their understanding of the function of economics?
3. How do these teachers implement their understanding of the function of economics within their social studies instructional decisions?

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The dominant themes of this era are economic. The last two centuries have seen global GDP per capita multiply ten times over (Roser, 2017), the world produces more than enough food for the seven billion people on the planet (Ranganathan, 2013), and since 1990, over a billion people have been lifted out of extreme poverty (Bagri, 2016). These changes have allowed human beings to live decades longer on average than at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (World Health Organization, 2011). Since 1981, 45 out of 52 countries surveyed reported an increase in happiness (World Values Survey, n.d.), and American workers are twice as productive as they were 40 years ago (Sherk, 2013). Economically the world is growing, making people fitter, happier, and more productive.

Yet that is far from the end of the global economic story. Inequality pervades global society to the detriment of democracy (Piketty, 2014). More than one billion people live on less than two American dollars per day (UNICEF, 2016), while the eight wealthiest men in the world have a net worth that is greater than the poorest 3.6 billion people combined (Mullany, 2017). Fifty percent of all wealth generated this century has been accrued by one percent of the population, while the bottom fifty percent of people have received one percent of generated wealth (M. Lawson, 2016). Health and nutrition deficits due to poverty cost the developing world 177 billion dollars in lifetime earnings (Fink et al., 2016). Even in the developed world, 300 million people live in poverty (International Labour Organization, 2016) and inequality is rampant in America (Saez & Zucman, 2016). Racial hierarchies are maintained via accumulated wealth (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006; Wise, 2013), social class structures are maintained via schooling and

social practices (Bowles & Gintis, 2011; Cookson, 2013) and though women are better educated than men, they still earn far less for the same work (American Association of University Women, 2016).

If we believe that the role of education is to develop a critical consciousness such that students and teachers can perceive these epochal themes and act on them (Freire, 2005a), then it is incumbent upon economic educators to develop a framework for critical economics; one that identifies the dominant narrative that has been promoted through traditional economics education, challenges the taken-for-granted ideas that underlie this narrative, and promotes a counter-narrative that is humanizing. It is also vital to explore the way that this dominant narrative has persisted in curriculum, and consider how teachers are prepared to counter dominant narratives.

This review of literature examines several interrelated concerns when addressing the role of economics education, the economic narrative, and its place in the social studies. First, I consider the way in which economics as a discipline within the school curriculum promotes a dominant narrative and the problems that this narrow consideration of economics entails. Second, I provide an overview of literature surrounding economics education and the specific pedagogical issues that abound in economics classrooms. Third, I look at the way dominant narratives manifest in the ideology of schools themselves and the social studies curriculum in particular. Fourth, I address important components of literature surrounding the preparation of teachers including teacher purpose. Finally, I conclude with an analysis of critical pedagogical literature and its potential application in economics pedagogy.

## **ECONOMICS AND THE DOMINANT NARRATIVE**

Wertsch (2000) describes how narrative functions as a sociocultural tool that helps to make sense of the world. While narratives “provide affordances as well as constraints” (p. 515) in understanding the past and present, they are situated in a sociocultural context that reflect the dominant concerns of their particular time and place. While Wertsch’s analysis attends to the role of national history narratives as cultural tools for a nation-state (e.g. in service of the myth of meritocracy [McNamee & Miller, 2004] or to promote a post-racial narrative [W. Smith & Brown, 2014]), there are dominant narratives at work throughout academic disciplines that serve local, national, and global hegemonic interests. This is the case in economics where a specific way of making sense of the world has held sway for the past 40 years, and has led to disastrous consequences for social institutions and individuals.

In general, scholars argue that neoclassical economics reigns supreme as the dominant perspective in the field of economics (Fine, 2008; A. Freeman, 2010; Keen, 2011; Lee, 2004b) and does so with limited controversy (Moseley, Gunn, & Georges, 1991). In this section, I will provide a brief overview of neoclassical economics and its place in the discipline. I will also explain what this overarching perspective means to the way economics as a discipline conceives of human beings and behavior, social organization, epistemology, history, and policy. Finally, I will describe the way in which neoclassical economics dehumanizes social groups outside of historically dominant norms.

## **Basic Assumptions**

The prevailing assumptions of neoclassical economics derive from two basic concepts: “(1) of man as a fully rational, but socially isolated agent, and (2) of the ‘market’ as a central coordination device of economic activities” (Ötsch & Kapeller, 2010, p. 19). Therefore the nature of a human is to pursue “individual material self-interest” with an “insatiable” appetite for acquisition (R. Miller, 1993, p. 29). Behavior of individuals is best coordinated by a competitive market which is “the favored norm for . . . social relationships” and is “deeply embedded in American culture” (R. Miller, 1993, p. 30). Thus neoclassical economics asserts as natural and preferable social relationships predicated on individualism, consumerism, and transactional relationships. These assumptions are necessary for neoclassical attempts to enhance the stature of the discipline via promotion of positivist analysis and scientific rationality. Brant (2016) describes positivism as ontologically predicated on the assumption that “the world is objective in the sense that it is independent of its knowers and by using scientific method it is possible to discover universal laws” (p. 9). This perspective has long held sway politically and academically in the social sciences which “continue to experience a positivistic haunting” (Adams, Keane, Dutton, & Steinmetz, 2005, p. 3) in their underlying assumptions about epistemology and ontology. The emphasis on Cartesian rationality in economics has been interlaced with the discipline’s aspiration to be a predictive science on par with physics since Adam Smith (Cameron & Astrid Siegmann, 2012) and has allowed “epistemologically virtuous predictions [which] possessed the qualities of both precision and generalization” (p. 166) to go unchecked.

## Neoclassical Standards

These concepts and assumptions of the neoclassical narrative go unchecked because the field, from curriculum to textbooks to researchers, are committed to maintaining “tight paradigmatic borders” and minimize “the scope of the debate within mainstream economics” (Ötsch & Kapeller, 2010, p. 17). Therefore, it should be no surprise to anyone who has taken a high school or introductory college course in economics that the typical economic curriculum foci such as scarcity, supply and demand, market structures, and specialization and trade are treated in a neoclassical manner. Neoclassical economics is the explicit foundation for the Council for Economic Education’s *Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics* (2010). These standards are similar to those that have been included in curriculum recommendations for economics for over 50 years (Walstad & Watts, 2015) and have been described as an *ideal* short list for basic economic principles (Hansen, Salemi, & Siegfried, 2002). According to the Council for Economic Education [NCEE] (2010), the standards “reflect the view of a large majority of economists today in favor of a ‘neoclassical model’ of economic behavior” (p. vi). While the NCEE acknowledges other paradigms, they argue that “[i]ncluding strongly held minority views of economic processes and concepts would have confused and frustrated teachers and students” (p. vi) who do not have the intellectual capacity or disciplinary foundation to evaluate the alternatives. This deficit view of teachers and students is then transferred to the state level where every state now has written economics standards (Council for Economic Education, 2016) and “[s]tates commonly use the [*Voluntary National Content*] *Standards* as a starting point for the



development of their economics requirements” (MacDonald & Siegfried, 2012, p. 309).

Despite limited literature on whether or not teachers adhere to standards, at least one study has found that:

while virtually all teachers in our sample deviate from the standards, the magnitude of the deviation is small . . . [and] as a result, the standards appear to be moderately successful in achieving its intended goal of creating convergence in content coverage in high school economics curricula. (Khayum, Valentine, & Friesner, 2006, p. 69)

The convergence, then achieved, assures that high school economics nationwide will be predicated on the neoclassical paradigm as the so-called *Voluntary* standards are enforced by law and ever present in the curriculum-in-use.

### **Neoclassical Textbooks**

A curricular emphasis on neoclassical economics manifests in economic textbooks as well. According to Lee and Lopus’s (2007) analysis, “all [high school] textbooks cover most of the 20 Voluntary National Standards” and most come close to covering all 20 (p. 203). These neoclassical components are reiterated throughout undergraduate and graduate textbooks as well (Lee & Keen, 2004) where “the basic canon of material . . . makes up 90 percent of the typical ‘principles course’” and “textbook decisions tend to hinge on matters of convenience (‘What did we use last year?’)” (Grimes, 2009, p. 95). The banality of textbook adoption decisions, however, belies the serious ramifications of the maintenance of the neoclassical status quo, for authors of textbooks are not simply attempting to sell their product, “[b]y their own account, they are much more invested in the struggle for the best minds in our society” (Graupe, 2012, p. 62). As Paul Samuelson, author of *Economics* which sold four million copies over five decades (Skousen, 1997) put it, “I don’t care who writes a nation’s laws

— or crafts its advanced treatises — if I can write its economics textbooks” (P. Saunders & Walstad, 1990, p. ix). This is an acknowledgement by America’s first Nobel laureate in economics and “the foremost academic economist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century” (Weinstein, 2009, para. 1) that the fundamental assumptions of the dominant narrative can supersede politics, diplomacy, and even democracy itself.

### **Neoclassical Field**

The field of economics has a tradition of enforcing a uniform perspective (Earle, Moran, & Ward-Perkins, 2016; Lee, 2004a). While the 1960s represented an era where a variety of intellectual perspectives were valued, by 1970, the vast majority of economics departments throughout the country had become neoclassical. Less than 5 percent of all economics PhDs awarded in the 1970s came from departments that were explicitly focused on ideas and issues outside of the neoclassical norm (Lee, 2004b). This uniformity lead to an exclusion of pluralist perspectives and allows neoclassical economists to “act as a hegemonic force within the discipline, limiting discourse and restricting the study of economics to a single perspective” (Barone, 1991, p. 16).

Hegemony is enforced in a number of ways; departments isolate themselves from cross-disciplinary study (Evensky, 2004), attempting to wall themselves off from “political scientists sociologists, anthropologists, and historians” (p. 206) in order to enforce and promote social definitions, linguistic conventions and limit the scope of economic inquiry and solutions. Economics journals and researchers are “self-referential, closed to the rest of society” (Bresser-Pereira, 2012, p. 18), and enforce conformity in the literature via peer review (A. Freeman, 2010). These fortifications ignore the history of

thought that is fundamental to the discipline (Dow, 2009) and ensure a uniformity in epistemology as well as methodology. It is no surprise then, that the field of economics reproduces this hegemony, for “[t]eaching this perspective as if it *is* economics allows economists to see their discipline as a complete system, and imbues them with the idea that neoclassical economics can and should be used to understand any problem that they face” (Earle et al., 2016, Chapter 2, Section 2, para. 8). Thus, the dominant narrative turns the field of economics into both a self-contained universe and a self-fulfilling prophecy.

### **The Consequences of the Dominant Narrative in Economics**

The problem with the disciplinary uniformity in economics education is the way in which all too many assumptions go unchallenged and become gospel among economists, economic educators, and economics students. The hegemony of neoclassical economics and its purported neutrality and rationality promote neoliberal policies that maintain oppressive social structures and deny alternative ways of naming the world in an economic fashion.

### ***The dominant narrative and ‘man’***

The first of these assumptions deals with the nature of man. ‘Man’ is deliberately used here to refer to the whole of humanity, not to reify patriarchy, but to call attention to the incredibly reductive and specific ways that men have colonized the discipline. So, in a sense, the first problem with economics and its treatment of man is that ‘man’ is a stand-in for human. However, the concerns over neoclassical visions of man stretch further and

isolate economic man or homo economicus as both “a self-interested utility maximizer [and] rational agent” (Lutz & Lux, 1988, p. 104) who functions as an individual machine-like cog in the greater machine of the market (Graupe, 2012). These two assumptions deserve to be interrogated, both for their theoretical utility, and their subservience to a neoliberal social order.

Entrenching man as an individual actor, as is required by many neoclassical models, results in several important conventions that become taken for granted in a dominant narrative of economics. Remmele (2011) describes the “long tradition in modern Western thinking” which approached “social behaviour on the basis of individual calculi” (p. 129) and suggests that economics education must interrogate this Eurocentric history in order to address social, civic, or value education. The failure to account for social or collective processes (beyond the market as coordinator of actions [c.f. Remmele, 2010]) is a failure to interrogate the “complex intersection of the innate traits of human nature” (Hunt, 2005, p. 429) including social institutions, relationships, processes, systems, and collective human endeavors. Analysis at the level of the collective is necessary for a critical study of any economy or society and is the only way to account for a “the historical genesis of . . . social relations and institutions” (p. 430) as well as their adequacy, potential future development, and possibilities to change them. Failing to account for any collective processes and relying on an isolated individual for modelling means that economic education cannot weigh in on one of the fundamental questions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: the intellectual and moral merits of social systems predicated on individualism or communitarianism (Glass, Rud, & Higgins, 2012), or can only do so by

negating communitarianism *prima facie*. Neoclassical economics never fails to participate in this debate however, for power is always at stake in ideological debates. The neoclassical scruple of *homo economicus* as individual allows for a “standard textbook portrayal of the market [as] essentially classless – individuals are after all atoms – and therefore, almost by definition, power, at least as political economy would conceive it, is also assumed away” (Cumbers & McMaster, 2012, p. 174). A failure to account for community, social class, and power ensures that existing insular social arrangements, class disparities, and power differentials will remain intact.

The predilection with Eurocentric notions of rationality functions similarly in neoclassical economics, with similar results. Rationality is at the core of neoclassical economics (Caltabiano, 2013; Lutz & Lux, 1988) and is often deployed in a way that emphasizes that economics is “a value-free, descriptive science” (Schank & Lorch, 2014, p. 56). Only by reducing man to a rational pleasure-maximizer without “gender, biography, emotions, religion, location, and preferences” (Bögenhold, 2010, p. 1571) could economics function as pure science on par with the natural sciences. This emphasis throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century moved economics away from its roots as a philosophical pursuit (Nussbaum, 2016), and promoted a “highly abstract, mechanical conception of human behaviour, markets, and government, with little space for history, institutions, ethics and other sources of analytical and normative complexity” (Garnett Jr., 2009, p. 60). Again, this feature of the neoclassical paradigm denies considerations of ethics, or social goods (Rider, 1999) while allowing power to operate surreptitiously, typically by assuming that unfettered capitalism is the best way to coordinate society (R. Miller,

1993), leading to massive inequality (Piketty, 2014), and frequent market failures (Shiller, 2010).

### ***The dominant narrative and scientific markets***

The drive to become the most ‘scientific’ social science (Henderson, 1989; Jo, Chester, & M. King, 2012) is grounded in a positivist epistemology which attempts to evaluate and predict market fluctuations in the same way physics evaluates and predicts the motion of bodies in space (Cameron & Astrid Siegmann, 2012). It is important to note here that this scientific view of economics holds sway over both conservative economists who promote free markets as the path to equality and freedom, and liberal economists who recognize individual differences and call for government intervention in markets to promote equality (Feiner, 1994). Both recognize economics as a science and both believe in a predictable market acting in mechanistic fashion, they simply disagree on the appropriate methods to make use of their predictions. Again this is an example of the hegemony of neoclassical economics, pervading the two ‘ends’ of the political spectrum and thus limiting the scope of debate.

The positivistic assumptions of neoclassical economics have a tenure that is shorter than many economists and economic educators realize. While many neoclassical economists view Smith’s (1838) *Wealth of Nations* (originally published in 1776) as a wholesale vindication of free-market policy to allow the invisible hand to reign supreme (Wight, 2007); they ignore his earlier *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1761) and other fundamental texts in the history of economic thought that show “[h]e and many others did

not see economics as an end in itself, but a means to achieve other purposes of life arrived through philosophical, religious or ethical reflections” (Brant, 2016, p. 9). The mathematical, scientific, and absolute nature of economics as a field was a twentieth-century advance, carried out by Friedman (1953), Blaug (1992), and others who purported to show that economics could be a “mathematical theory . . . uniquely and absolutely correct” (Bresser-Pereira, 2012, p. 18).

The coordinator of this mathematical theory is the market, a sacred concept in neoclassical economics where it is believed with Talmudic reverence that “in the beginning there were markets” (Williamson, 1985, p. 87). Yet despite the reliance on markets as the fundamental divining rod of economic understanding, “the market concept itself is hardly if ever analyzed in a systematic fashion” (Rosenbaum, 2000, p. 456). While the market is a core concept throughout economic curricula, it is often left undefined in economics classes, or when it is, the lexicon surrounding its definition leaves one to believe that ‘market’ is “the keyword on the register of freedom, from now on first in front of the register of equality. The reality of ‘market’ as means of social regulation is never questioned, it is obvious” (Blanchard & Coléno, 2016, p. 23). The market then, discursively represents freedom and equality (Mikl-Horke, 2010), disabusing students of any attempt to analyze markets as “social fields in which people with different interests, status and power fight for the appropriation of profit” (p. 7). When students of economics cannot see markets as man-made and socially constructed (Cech & Marks, 2007), they likewise cannot be subjects that act to change the way markets operate, and are left as objects acted upon by the forces that maintain hegemony.

This relationship between subject and object is fundamental to the divergence between neoclassical economics as social science and physics as a natural science. Denis (2009) illustrates this structural divergence as follows:

The hope that cold fusion does or does not work does not give those hoping for one or the other much incentive to support this or that kind of physics . . . But with, say, minimum wages, the case is quite different: every organised interest with a stake in the matter is free to commission their own research, in-house, or bought in . . . The purpose here is not the discovery of truth, but the generation of effective rhetoric. Those hoping for cold fusion would generally accept that there is a truth, and they're probably better off knowing it sooner rather than later. Those whose interests will be promoted or damaged by this or that policy on minimum wages, or some change to the tax system, are principally interested in ensuring that their interest is represented as the interest of society, and hence acquiring social acceptance for their desired outcome. (p. 9)

Again, power is assumed away under the dominant narrative, and again a consideration of social, economic, or political alternatives disappear from the discipline.

### ***The dominant narrative and the absence of history***

There are two forms of history that are absent in the discipline of economics. Earle et al. (2016), in their study of economics courses throughout the UK, assert that the history of economic thought, or the historical deliberations within the discipline that might offer alternatives to the status quo, are absent in economics classes, a finding that is reflected in analyses in the United States (Grimes, 2009). There is also an absence of history within economic models themselves which ensures that the status quo is all that is analyzed. Both facets of ahistoricity are important to consider as part of a dominant, neoclassical narrative in economics.

All too often, the context of historical debates over economics and their utility in the present are forgotten. Peart and Levy (2005) decry this absence as “rather common”



(p. 173) despite the payoff that might result. As an example they illustrate the context under which Thomas Carlyle famously declared economics as the “dismal science” (Carlyle, 2007, p. 672). While most take this quote to mean that economics holds an “avowedly unrealistic view of human nature that denied the possibility of human improvement” (Peart & Levy, 2005, p. 171), a contextual reading rooted in an analysis of the history of economic thought shows that “the reason Carlyle called [economics] dismal was that we economists advocate markets as opposed to slavery” (p. 172). Carlyle was bemoaning the purported race-neutrality of economics and advocating white supremacy. This one anecdote provides a cornucopia of evidence that much of the philosophical basis for modern neoclassical economics needs to be analyzed in its appropriate context, for if this seemingly innocuous phrase that is so commonly used to describe the discipline is embedded in history, white supremacy, and callous dehumanization, then the ahistorical nature of the discipline must be challenged. Hodgson (2001) describes this ahistoricity as “an alarming degree of philosophical illiteracy . . . that hinders the progress of creative and evaluative intellectual development” (p. 354) which then trickles down to “students who are not equipped to critically evaluate what they learn. . . . [L]acking sufficient background in the history of economic thought, students readily accept the ‘specious assumptions’ and logical errors propounded by their teachers” (Schiffman, 2004, p. 1088).

To address this condition, Bailly (2016) advocates a rigorous examination of the way in which neoclassical economics came to dominate the discipline at the expense of more radical perspectives in the 1960s and 1970s, both broadly and in the economics of

education. He shows how the neoclassical emphasis on markets and mathematical analysis eventually overwhelmed the radical critique of neoclassical economics which tried to encourage the discipline to “account for the difficulties of the period, such as the destruction of the environment and inequalities in wealth and racism and sexism” (p. 352). While there are textbooks that address the history of economic thought, they often avoid these ideological conflicts and instead “typically offer a heavy sampling of orthodox ideas” (Wrenn, 2009, p. 94), and “do not present consistent examinations or discussions of dissenting thought in the discipline” (p. 95).

The orthodox ideas and philosophical illiteracy that stem from an absence of history of economic thought are replicated by the absence of history in economic models. As part of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century movement to a universal idea of economics as neoclassical, economics became more mathematical thus the analysis of “relationships concerning many items like growth, prices, trade, or employment are done at very general levels as if economies exist in a vacuum having no institutions and no contextual framing of time and space” (Bögenhold, 2010, p. 1569). This contextual aversion and mathematical affinity results in a failure to take into account new evidence, and thus when theory and evidence conflict, neoclassical economists “throw out the evidence but retain the theory” (John King, 2012, p. 314) as has been the case with the recent financial crisis where Ben Bernanke, former Federal Reserve Chairman, and Oliver Blanchard, chief economist of the IMF, and scores of other orthodox economists decried critiques of neoclassical modelling. Clearly, “[i]f the worst economic downturn in 80 years leaves ‘the major conclusions from macroeconomic theory’ very largely intact, it is difficult to

see friendly criticism . . . ever having much of an impact on mainstream thinking” (John King, 2012, p. 308). Thus the classical view of the economy as a static system, devoid of history or dynamism will likely hold even under pressure from a variety of approaches that seek to demonstrate the socially constructed nature of much neoclassical theory (Hake, 2009).

### ***The dominant narrative, economics education, and neoliberalism***

Concerns about the discipline of economics promoting a narrative that centers an egocentric, individualistic ‘man’ as a cog in the greater ahistorical machine of the economy would be troubling enough if they were contained in an insular field hoisted above the global landscape in an ivory tower. Unfortunately, the dominant narrative of economics pervades not just the academic community but the national and international halls of power, promoting free market capitalism and neoliberal policies at the expense of equality and societal well-being (Wright-Maley & Davis, 2017a). This is occurring in tandem with a neoliberal drive to privatize the education system as a whole and to subvert democracy through school policy and structure (Au & Ferrare, 2015b; Giroux, 2017; Ross & Gibson, 2007) where “state regulation and state intervention are seen as obstacles to free market competition” (Au & Ferrare, 2015a, p. 4) and thus schools are defunded, turned over to corporate or private entities, while being restructured to mirror business structures and emphasizing preparation for the labor market as the goal of education (Au & Ferrare, 2015a). By considering the way neoclassical economics affects

students and the way it affects policy, we can understand the neoliberal imperative that undergirds the dominant narrative in economics.

Economic education, as practiced throughout the United States and much of the world, has several important ramifications for the students that take economic classes at the university level. In a longitudinal study of American university graduates, Allgood, Bosshardt, van der Klaauw, & Watts (2012) show that economic majors differ from business or other majors in both political partisanship and preferences for neoliberal policies. Taking more economic courses decreased the likelihood of joining the Democratic party and increased the likelihood of joining the Republican party. With respect to attitudes toward public policy, economics majors are more likely to agree that tariffs and minimum wages hurt the economy, and are more likely to disagree that inequality, trade deficits, and oil prices are issues that require government intervention. In fact, a majority of both business and economics majors disagreed with the statement “The distribution of income in the U.S. should be more equal” (p. 262), indicating not only did they disagree that the government should be involved in income redistribution, a common debate between the major American parties, they saw the current level of inequality as acceptable. Similar findings emerge from a review of literature that finds it “rather certain that the majority of economists are more in favour of the distribution by the price system than most non-economists and that they show a weaker commitment to common-sense fairness norms” (Hellmich, 2012, p. 21). That this attitude toward inequality permeates economic discourse even after the financial crisis is no surprise. As argued by Arestis, Charles, and Fontana (2015), the economic norms of individualism and rationalism were

not disbanded as a result of the crisis, indeed, their utility in maintaining white patriarchy meant that “the capitalist value of economic self-interests and particular masculine ideals such as risk-taking and authoritative action have merged in a way to sustain the norm of high status/high earnings leading to the Great Recession” (p. 382). If economics students and economists themselves are satisfied with the existing state of affairs, we can expect the current neoliberal order to continue.

Policy-making in a neoclassical framework builds on these overarching understandings of social issues, market forces, and power dynamics. The dominance of neoclassical economics in the political realm means that many questions of social priorities are not answered democratically, but instead we see “political debates [become] purely ‘economic’ questions to be answered by experts” (Earle et al., 2016, Chapter 1, Section 2, para. 2). Earle et al. (2016) refer to this democratic subversion as an ‘Econocracy’, born out of the neoliberal imperative to separate the economy from its relationship to other parts of life, tinker with it as a mechanic would an engine, and improve its performance as a whole system which will invariably improve outcomes for all. The import of this sociopolitical development means that citizens are reduced to “utility machines, robots or guinea pigs” and must submit to “a few other human beings . . . who, as part of the elite, can steer and control those utility machines, robots, and guinea pigs” (Graupe, 2012, p. 80). This element of the neoliberal shift is what Fine (2008) calls ‘economic imperialism’, where economics and the so-called ‘economic way of thinking’ comes to dominate the social sciences, most notably political science (Hedtke, 2010). Moreover, turning political issues into math problems promotes not just

economic imperialism, but a broader “Anglo-Saxon model of capitalism” (Bresser-Pereira, 2012, p. 5) justified by neoclassical economics. The connection between market mechanics and deeper questions about philosophy, value, and ethics is summed up by Jo et al. (2012):

[M]arkets “behave” like a machine that generates what people desire most . . . the market system allocates all the resources, human or material in the most efficient way. The fact that many resources – including our time – is allocated by non-market mechanisms to activities critical to human well-being is overlooked. What cannot be valued by a market price, is not valued. . . . Consequently, supply and demand has achieved pre-eminent philosophical status and the belief in the survival of the fittest has become the organizing principle of people, business enterprises, and governments. (p. 155)

Turning over the breadth of social and political options to market optimizers is at the core of the neoliberal project, and subverts democracy by envisioning people and polity as levers and gears to be pulled and turned on the basis of their profitability, rather than agents of their own lives who should have a voice in shaping their world and future. As such, we see that neoclassical economics and its prevalence as a dominant narrative is a powerful tool of the neoliberal agenda and to dismantle that agenda means dismantling neoclassical hegemony within economics education.

### ***The dominant narrative and race, class, and gender***

‘Survival of the fittest’, or natural selection, is another example of a natural science concept that crept into the social sciences via the hegemony of Eurocentric positivism, and like the connection between Social Darwinism and eugenics (Leonard, 2005), a connection between neoclassical economics and intergroup differences emerged. As Arestis et al. (2015) explained: “In the neoclassical approach to economics, individualization is in effect linked to free-market ideology, which celebrates the actions

and fulfilment of an atomistic individual who does not belong to any class, gender, race, or age group” (p. 371). These components of identity, while often used to oppress and ‘other’ those outside of the norm, are fundamental to understanding the way in which individuals and society interact. To ignore class, gender, and race is to not only ignore important aspects of the self, but to whitewash any potential resistance to oppressive conditions.

Perhaps the most basic way of looking at intergroup differences in economics is via social class. While a great many economic philosophers have addressed this issue in the past, the “notion of class has been expunged from [neoclassical] economics by the concept of the indifference curve and its ‘one size fits all’ treatment of everyone from the poorest Somali to the richest American” (Keen, 2011, p. 66). A classless world through the neoclassical lens leads to a conception of economic justice where “market forces at work in factor markets and in goods and services markets are assumed to deliver what is deserved to every participant in the economic process” (Scaperlanda, 1999, p. 419). Therefore, growth in the form of material progress should be pursued at all costs over such concerns as “greater equality in the distribution of opportunity, wealth and income” because “material abundance must be achieved for the good and just society to be possible” (Wisman, 2003, p. 427). This is a rationale for neoliberal policy, as discussed earlier, but it is also dehumanizing in that it assumes away, rather than explore the issue of class. It “ignores the facts of power and of class conflict, while assuming that the economy is perfectly competitive” (Sherman, 1984, p. 269). In fact:

the whole theory of marginal productivity defends the present income distribution by concluding that each factor gets an income equal to its marginal product. Not only does this rule out the exploitation of workers, but it also leads to the tautological argument that women and minorities must be inferior because they are paid less income than white males. (p. 269-270)

If the dominant narrative asserts a classless, raceless, and genderless society, one must ask about the features of the discipline that allow such a flattening of human identity to take place.

Mainstream economics, in the form of the Committee on Economic Education, has “hindered the growth of women in economics” (Bartlett, Ferber, & Green, 2009, p. 154) by advocating “a very narrow range of economic principles” (p. 154) and failing to move beyond the ‘chalk and talk’ method (Becker & Watts, 2001) that speak to learning styles of women or other ‘othered’ groups (Jensen & Owen, 2001; G. Miller, 2012). The failure to speak to women, either in terms of topics or pedagogy leads to a professorate that is majority male. Only 33 percent of first year PhD students are women, and 31 percent of PhDs awarded go to women. Historically, this imbalance has been even more severe, as 87 percent of all Full professors nationally are men (CSWEP, 2016). While this is an improvement from 96 percent in the mid- 1990s (Dynan & Rouse, 1997; Kahn, 1995), the winnowing of women from the discipline helps to explain why, until recently there has been a “lack of feminist analysis in economics” (Albelda, 1995, p. 253) and it further entrenches neoclassical economics and its universalized conception of ‘man’ as the economic agent (Nelson, 1993).

The same exclusion and disciplinary narrowing occurs with regard to race. It should come as no surprise given the systematic racism of the American school system



that students of color generally do worse in terms of grades in their economic coursework as early as high school (Rebeck & Walstad, 2015), and that economic textbooks marginalize the experiences of women and minorities (Feiner, 1993; Weiner & Roberts, 1990). These manifestations of a racially blind discipline have a lineage in the history of economic thought (Peart & Levy, 2005), and contribute to an academic community that is largely white (Albelda, 1995) and lacking in analysis of “economic outcomes by gender, race-ethnicity and other factors” (Power, 2012, p. 258). King and Finley (2015) argue that this lack of analysis is the result of a colorblind ideology and while “neoclassical/colorblind economics might be theoretically sound, in practice White supremacist ideology greatly benefited from systemic racist economic policy and wealth building of individuals and businesses” (p. 196).

## **ECONOMICS TEACHING AND LEARNING**

If the neoclassical paradigm is the dominant narrative in economics, teachers and teacher educators should understand the type of economics education that is normed in the United States and allows this dominant narrative to be perpetuated. Particularly, it is important to understand how teachers are prepared to teach economics, rationales for teaching economics, methods for teaching economics, and how students conceptualize economic concepts. Economics is part of the required curriculum in the majority of states (Council for Economic Education, 2016) and the recent financial crisis has led to many states increasing their requirements for economics education and personal financial literacy education (Grimes, 2012; Mikl-Horke, 2010; Walstad & Watts, 2015). Therefore, with the danger of the dominant narrative becoming ossified even further into the official curriculum, the question of the state of economics teaching and learning looms large.

## **Economics Teacher Preparation**

While there is a lack of research in economics education relative to other social studies disciplines (S. Miller & VanFossen, 2008), there are several studies that address generalized understandings of economics teachers and their subject-matter background. S. Miller and VanFossen (2008) in their review of social studies literature, find that “most economics is taught in other social studies courses by teachers prepared to be comprehensive social studies teachers” (p. 291). Older studies have shown a lack of economic coursework among economics teachers (Lynch, 1990, 1994), newer studies indicate that this lack of preparation in both subject-matter content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge in economics continues (Ayers, 2016; Joshi & Marri, 2006), and teachers of economics still have less economics preparation than other social studies subdisciplines (Aske, 2000, 2003; Walstad, 2001). While studies suggest that increased coursework in economics enhances student ‘learning’ in economics (Allgood & Walstad, 1999; Bosshardt & Watts, 2005; Butters, Asarta, & Fischer, 2011), the ‘learning’ under study is generally measured by standardized, multiple choice exams and thus deserves the same scrutiny of any standardized metric and measure (Grant, 2006; Kohn, 2000). Another approach to determining teacher content knowledge in economics might interrogate the specific preservice teacher understandings about economics, to better understand other views of economics that might eventually be taught, as opposed to the ability to conform to the dominant narrative preached throughout economics coursework and measured by standardized exams.

A limited number of studies have attempted to understand preservice teacher pedagogical knowledge and conceptualization of economics. Choi's (2013) study of preservice teachers in South Carolina and Georgia found that epistemology was a significant influence on what and how teachers would teach. Those teachers who "learned economics in a structured, math-oriented way" (p. 34) saw economics as an academic pursuit, and leaned on "traditional and routine ways of teaching and external resources" (p. 32) whereas those who learned economics in a more practical way were more likely to pursue relevant materials and constructivist pedagogy. Other studies have attempted to conceptualize financial morality among preservice teachers, finding that conceptions varied across identity descriptors (Bates & Lucey, 2010), but that preservice teachers were more concerned about inequality than peers who were finance students (Lucey & Bates, 2014). Joshi and Marri (2006), in their implementation of an economics-specific methods course found that preservice teachers "equate economics with neoclassical economics" and "wished to merely understand 'how the economy worked' and did not recognize the ideological underpinnings in this objective" (p. 200). Several studies of preservice teacher pedagogical knowledge have ignored this level of critical perspective toward neoclassical economics, however, and decry the lack of intuitiveness that preservice teachers demonstrate with respect to the economic way of thinking (Ayers, 2016), a set of concepts fundamental to the neoclassical paradigm, or simply measure competency based on standardized exams (Fritsch et al., 2015; Kuhn, Alonzo, & Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia, 2016).

### **Rationales for Teaching Economics**

Given the extensive number of ways economics has been conceptualized and the degree to which it is integrated in daily life, it is no surprise that teachers and researchers

have put forth a variety of reasons to teach economics. Vanfossen (2000) found that teachers' rationales for economics generally fell into three categories; "economics as preparation for college economics, economics as life skills or economics as good citizenship" (p. 391). Similarly, S. Miller and Vanfossen (2008) suggest that the following components of economic literacy appear in the previous handbook chapter on economics (Schug & Walstad, 1991), the *Voluntary National Content Standards*, and essentially "almost every statement of the case for economic literacy" (p. 285): (a) economics for social roles, such as consumers, producers, etc.; (b) economics for citizenship and public decision-making; (c) application of economic reasoning beyond facts and concepts; and (d) the "ubiquitous nature of economic phenomena" (p. 286). These components were found in this review of literature, however, rather than separate items (c) and (d), it may be helpful to explore the ubiquity and applicability of economics together, both in the social studies classroom and the broader world, particularly given the literature that has emerged after the Great Recession and global financial crisis.

### ***Economics for extant social roles***

It is common for researchers and teachers to posit a rationale for economics that includes a suggestion that economics literacy enhances consumer literacy, and thus is important in a society that is decidedly consumerist (Sandlin, Burdick, Norris, & Hoechsmann, 2012). A typical example of promoting economics to enhance student consumerism comes from Charkins (2013) who, in introducing a special issue of *Social Studies Review*, made the case for economics as interesting, relevant, skill-based, and rational. His examples to support these contentions illustrate the neoclassical, consumerist nature of economic priorities. He claims that economics is interesting and relevant because it helps students make the right decision about college. The "right"

decision, of course, is to attend due to the “difference in lifetime earning between a high school dropout and a college graduate” (p. 3). He allows that there is a bland theoretical base in economics, but it can be relevant because we have to make choices about whether it is worth the infrastructure costs to feed the world, narrowing what might be a discussion of ethics or morality to cost/benefit analysis. Economics is a skill, according to Charkins, because it helps make decisions in a profitable way, and finally economics is rational and value-neutral in that it can help students “make informed consumer decisions . . . think carefully about careers . . . participate in political discussions using benefit/cost analysis” (p. 6) and develop their human capital such that they have marketable skills in order to secure employment. This emphasis on decision-making as maximizing opportunity cost financially further demonstrates the neoclassical vision of economics and being. To be human is to consume in the most profitable way possible, whether that consumption is of material goods, or social goods such as education. Further examples of this consumerist rationale for economics exist in literature on methods for teaching economics (Broome & Preston-Grimes, 2011; Marks & Davis, 2006; Moore, Sumrall, Mott, Mitchell, & Theobald, 2015; Porter, 2011; Posnanski, Schug, & Schmitt, 2007; Vargha, 2004) and in evaluations of economics curricula (Schug & Clow, 2002; Schug & Hagedorn, 2005, 2006). Despite the ubiquity of economics rationales that promote economics for the purpose of performing the role of consumer, there are those who are interested in challenging these taken-for-granted conceptions of economics.

### ***Economics for critical social roles***

Apple (2013) describes how democracy has become an economic, rather than political concept, and the combined forces of neoliberalism, neoconservativism, managerial accountability, and authoritarian populism have defined freedom as the

freedom for consumers to choose. For economics to be a space to critically evaluate the role of citizen as consumer, it requires a thorough understanding of how consumerism has taken the place of democracy in education writ large. Sandlin et al. (2012) lay out the way that a more critical vision of economics could question the way that consumerism is normalized in our relations with the market, and the way it takes the place of shared spaces. They also call for an economic critique of markets as deleterious to democracy and of advertising as promoting irrationality. In the end, they seek to promote critical practices against consumerism through democratic education that emphasizes informal education and public pedagogy. This involves “working against *material* products and processes of oppression tied to capitalist production and consumption but also by working in the *symbolic* realm” (p. 160), and framing schools as sites of resistance to consumerism and consumption. Examples of this critical engagement against consumerist narratives in economics are rare, but extant, and deserve attention if economics is to be a place to speak back against consumerism.

Whitlock (2015) offers an explicit and critical departure from the consumerist dominant narrative of economics by presenting an inquiry unit that promoted a social business designed to help the homeless in their community. While much of the unit promotes comprehension of many traditional economics concepts, the guiding question for the unit is “How can we use a small loan to help our community?” (p. 119), indicating that there may be a purpose for businesses beyond generating profit, exchanging wages for human capital, and providing consumer goods. Financial education is consequently another site where consumerism can be contested. According to Reifner and Schellhowe

(2010), it is vital that economics education evaluate not only the financial markets, but the way that financial consumption is increasingly driven by private firms and organizations who put out their own financial curriculum, allowing business interests to determine ‘who gets what, when’ (Salinas & Reidel, 2007). These materials “fail to incorporate the critical attitude towards the financial system” and “simply teach the ‘rules of the road’, assuming that there is a fixed and unalienable set of rules, facts and procedures” (p. 33), and that all consumers are equally able to engage with the financial system. Instead, they advocate for a “critical focus on consumer rights and needs” that will “foster knowledge alongside human and social competences” (p. 41) so that consumers of the financial system are thinking about distributed justice (e.g., Rawls, 2009) rather than their material self-interest. Finally, globalization stands in the way of economics education that is critical of consumerism within the unrelenting “global discourse to ‘keep up’ internationally” (Gaudelli, 2013, p. 561) in terms of economic competitiveness. This turns the student into a consumer of education that simply considers the “academic value added of a school or program” (p. 561) and how that choice impacts their opportunities on a global stage. Instead, economics could counter this discourse to “create an alternative space that may allow people to imagine differently the economic rationale and conjure a different version of global learning” (p. 562) that “requires humankind to change twentieth-century emphasis on individual rights to emphasis on world-centered obligation” (Kirkwood, 2001, p. 11). This critical re-thinking of consumerism is necessary to disrupt the dominant narrative that economics education is about simply churning out the best consumers and producers possible to maintain the global capitalist system.

### ***Economics to better understand the past and present***

Many rationales for economics education draw on the idea that economics is embedded in day-to-day life, and thus is essential to fully understand life in the past as well as life in the present. While social studies teachers may have a lack of specific economic knowledge and coursework (Lynch, 1990; S. Miller & VanFossen, 2008), “there is so much economics embedded in the history or geography” (Imazeki, 2013, p. 40) that they have experienced. Therefore, economics is important because of its contribution to an understanding of the history and current events.

Multiple studies have considered the role of economics in the history curriculum. Mitchell (2010) argues that it is impossible to understand the modern world without an understanding of the technological, environmental, and ideological changes of the last two centuries through an economic lens. She points to energy markets, diminishing resources, political revolutions, the industrial revolution, globalization, transportation, colonialism, slavery, and warfare as thematic strands that require teachers to make “sure social and cultural changes are as embedded in narratives of world history as political-economy” (p. 50), and to address “the difficulty of weaving the diffuse particularities of daily life into a coherent narrative that rings true for most of the world” (p. 50). History is a story, and without economics it is an incomplete story at best.

The imperative to infuse economics into history is entrenched in an analysis of the American system of human slavery, where an economic lens is necessary to ensure that “history should not be depicted as event driven by fate” (Patterson, 2002, p. 43), and to show that the institution of slavery had an economic impact that exists into the present.



Students who understand slavery in this way are more likely to “contribute to the eradication of the prejudice and racial discrimination that slavery left in its wake” (Patterson, 2002, p. 40). Further exploration of the human slave trade in America through economics might reveal the way that banning the foreign human slave trade increased domestic demand for human slaves which increased their value and thus incentivized resistance to emancipation, or it might allow for a comparison to the British plan for emancipation that involved financial compensation to owners of human slaves as opposed to a Civil War in the United States (Zambelli, 2013). Other historical lessons that would be better understood by emphasizing economics might include the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (Langelett & Schug, 2004), a variety of American military conflicts (Boldt & Kassis, 2004), the Greco-Roman world and Imperial China (Ellington, 2011), and the history of NAFTA and the Mexican border with the United States (Bigelow, 2006).

Current events deserve to be analyzed with as many methodological lenses as these historical examples, and thus require the use economics if they are to be fully explored within social studies. Sustainability is one of the most significant issues affecting our planet (Cloud, 2010; Peterson-Boring & Forbes, 2014), and an economic analysis of sustainability, the environment, and climate change serve as examples of the way economics can flesh out current events in the classroom. While some may seek to utilize a neoclassical model of economics to encourage better environmental policy within existing political frameworks (Schug, 1997), others demonstrate the way that economics can do more than simply “reflect the costs of long-term depletion of

nonrenewable resources” (R. Miller, 1993b, p. 66). Seeber and Birke (2011) promote an economics education for sustainability that is founded on both “economic understanding [and] an internalisation of relevant values” (p. 177) that undergird the choice to pursue sustainability. They suggest that:

Economic understanding for sustainability comprises understanding of economically rational decisions on the side of the consumers, as well as of the producers, of how markets work, of the impact of producers’ and consumers’ decisions on the environment, of social dilemmas and corresponding institutional solutions. (p. 177)

Due to the inherent social dilemmas and need for institutional solutions, economics education must consider a “‘broader questions and bigger toolbox’ approach to teaching economics” (Nelson & Goodwin, 2009, p. 175) that challenges traditional views of resource maintenance, analyzes the ecological impact of consumption, and considers the relationship between economic growth and the environment. Neoclassical economics, in its emphasis on economic growth at all costs, assumes away issues of sustainability, or treats the environment as an externality to the model. A counter-narrative might include an emphasis on Raworth’s (2017) ‘donut economics’ which is effectively agnostic about economic growth, preferring instead to find balance between social foundations, including basic needs and civil rights, and an ecological ceiling, including environmental sustainability. There is also the opportunity to consider economic solutions such as public ownership as a way to secure a better environment for the present and future (Cumbers & McMaster, 2012).

These social dilemmas and institutional solutions also come up when considering the way that economics is taught in the wake of the great recession. Again, there are

neoclassical ways of addressing this major economic event via economics (Schug & Wood, 2011), or opportunities to rethink economics in the wake of the global financial crisis. Mittelstaedt, Lutz, and Wiepcke (2013) suggest that the crisis allows economics educators to rethink economic imbalances, potential paths of development, and ecological dimensions of the economy. Their rationale for economics education post-crisis involves the understanding that crises will reoccur without a “systematic rethinking concerning the economic architecture and the handling of resources (financial but also natural and social)” (p. 17). Likewise, Neumann (2012), demonstrates the failure of traditional economics to account for government and systemic failure, and advocates that economics should be the place to explore the factors leading to the crisis such as regulatory failure and the corporate influence on government.

The crisis has ramifications for personal financial literacy as well (Lucey, Agnello, & Laney, 2016), where alternative/counter conceptions of financial literacy might challenge the “choice-based, profit-driven context” in favor of “open conversations about the contexts that guide choices, the biases and influences of resource control on decision making, and the importance of considering the welfare of underrepresented sub-groups when making financial decisions” (Lucey & Laney, 2012, p. xvii). These examples of addressing the global financial crisis might be supplemented by a significant learning approach to economics where the human dimension and experiential learning pedagogies combine to allow students to “confront the limits of a narrowly defined approach to economics” (McGoldrick & Peterson, 2011, p. 23) without generalizing as to their unique experiences as a result of the crisis. While the crisis and other current events do not

“require the development of new pedagogical techniques to capture the civic and human dimension” of the crisis, they do require “the utilization of such approaches that capture the current reality” (p. 23) and provide invaluable opportunities to enhance economic education and combat the dominant narrative.

### ***Economics for citizenship***

Justifications for teaching economics to fit social roles and economics to understand the past and present are inherently relying on conceptions of citizenship to promote a certain vision of the necessity of economic education (Crowley & Swan, 2016). What these justifications have in common is a split between those who would promote economics to better fit and function within the existing system, and those who would promote economics to critically evaluate and structurally alter the existing system. This duality is inherent in the literature that promotes economics for the purposes of ‘good’ citizenship. There are those that consider ‘good’ citizenship the ability to be an informed participant in the current system, similar to the personally responsible or participatory citizen in Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) framework where personally responsible citizens follow the rules of the community and society, and a participatory citizen gets involved in making sure the community and society are well run. There are also those who consider ‘good’ citizenship to represent a justice-oriented citizen, who “critically assesses social, political and economic structures to see beyond surface causes” (p. 240). Both of these rationalizations have economics education at their core, but rest on near polar opposite rationales for teaching economics.

One of the three themes in Vanfossen's (2000) study of teacher rationales for economics is that "economic knowledge is necessary for successful citizenship participation in our democratic society" (p. 404). This represents one end of the spectrum of why economics is important for citizenship: encouraging success in the current system. This perspective contains a number of neoclassical assumptions about economics regarding knowledge and what it means to be a citizen in a 'democratic society'. Vanfossen (2005) argues that "core economic content necessary for effective civic education" (p. 43) includes an emphasis on property rights and their role in the market system, comparing competitive and non-competitive markets, marginal analysis and trade-offs to decisions, role of government in market failure and regulation, and the recognition that "trade leads to gains due to the theory of competitive advantage" (p. 43) and thus any barrier to free trade has a cost. In these emphases, he asserts that economic freedom and political freedom are related, and that good citizens "need a core of economic knowledge and certain degree of economic literacy in order to analyze and make sense of complex questions of public policy" (p. 61) Therefore, according to Vanfossen (see also S. Miller, 1988; Schug & Walstad, 1991; Schug & Wood, 2011; Vanfossen, 2000) good citizens should demonstrate a version of economic literacy grounded in neoclassical theory that promotes neoliberal policies.

While other authors do not go quite so far in promoting neoliberalism through a specific kind of economic literacy, many do justify economic education on the basis that citizens need to make sense of the world around them and adjust their decision-making to ensure their interests are met within existing economic frameworks. For example, in

outlining economics of the ‘heart and head’ Schug and Clark (2001) offer a vision of economics for citizenship that utilizes the concept of opportunity cost to evaluate moral decisions. This substitutes decisions made by self-interest (which they contrast with decisions made by greed) for moral decisions that might ‘cost’ too much in terms of scarce resources. After making a specious comparison between the morality of market-based economies and the death toll of communist regimes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they conclude that economics for citizenship ideally allows market rationality to guide values of discipline, honesty and trustworthiness, tolerance, cooperation, courtesy, enterprise, thrift, and responsibility. The belief that “self-interested behavior can be channeled to produce socially beneficial behavior” (p. 54) is a hallmark of liberal conceptions of economics guided by neoclassical theory (cf. Gutter & Garrison, 2011; VanFossen & McGrew, 2011). Other ways to utilize economics to enhance citizenship within the current system might involve an understanding of the way that economic conditions factor into political campaigns (Langelett & Schug, 2005), campaign finance reform (Levy, Hartwick, Muñoz, & Gudgel, 2014), or promoting civic responsibility in the economic response to natural disasters (Lintner, 2006).

The above view of economic citizenship represents “a ‘minimalist’ approach to citizenship, which aims to induct students into effective performance in one form of citizenship” (Davies, 2006, p. 25). An alternative conceptualization of economic literacy for citizenship might promote a “‘maximalist’ approach to citizenship education, which aims to equip individuals to evaluate alternative modes of engagement” and “should lead to teaching that exposes values and assumptions implicit in each discourse” (p. 25).

While “governments face an incentive (however good their intentions) to design a citizenship-education curriculum that is minimalist” (p. 26), Davies suggests critical approaches to economic citizenship should address the way that discourse and power operate to maintain market hegemony and minimalist citizenship in economics education. Those who promote economics for more critical or maximalist citizenship tend to emphasize economics as a place to critique systemic injustices and to imagine more just economic arrangements. Lucey and Grant (2010) describe these two approaches as either understanding “patterns of action that concern acquisition and use of resources for personal use” or understanding “patterns of action that support or challenge distributions of goods and resources for the benefit of the community” (p. 122). This type of economic citizenship is necessary if economics is to be a discipline that critically evaluates the social order and seeks to change it.

Sober Giecek’s (2007) emphasis on teaching economics as if people matter is one way to utilize economics and citizenship to critique systematic injustice. By emphasizing the discrepancy between the ‘American Dream’ and reality, students can “examine to what extent meritocracy exists in America” (Sober, 2017, p. 85). She also emphasizes visualization techniques to estimate concentrated wealth, and historical perspectives on wealth building to better equip citizens to understand economic injustice and “engage with this problem at both its practical and its ideological roots” (p. 91). This emphasis on valuing humans in economic study by analyzing the discourse of meritocracy, and evaluating the justice of concentrated wealth is vital, and “[i]n preparing students for democratic citizenship, it is important for educators to do more than provide information .

. . they need to engage students in questions of justice, values, and power” (Neumann, 2015, p. 242).

The question then becomes how to engage in these questions, and how to resolve conflicts through a dialogue that “value[s] the views of others from a perspective of global steward-ship, rather than control and power” (Lucey & Grant, 2010, p. 123) in order to prepare students to be justice-oriented global citizens (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). One way to pursue this is also promoted by an approach that combines ethics and social rationality where “ethics and economics are not supposed to be pitted against each other, but to be reconciled by – or at least integrated into – the economic citizen” (Schank & Lorch, 2014, p. 57). The reconciliation could alter the subordination of individual action to the public welfare, disabusing oneself of economic myths, and focusing on moral judgments that enhance public welfare in economic and political contexts. The reconciliation would emphasize an economic perspective that realizes power and conflict are at stake throughout the sociopolitical spectrum, and market solutions will never perfectly align the interests of all principals and agents (Davies, 2002). It may also require action. Nichols (2017) critiques the neoclassical, civic republican citizenship (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006) that many proponents of economic citizenship adhere to, and asserts that “[b]y corporatizing citizenship, schools act as peddlers of injustice” (p. 39). According to him, “[t]he key is to teach children how to think critically about questions of power, privilege, and justice so they can create a more human world in which to live” (p. 38). Therefore, this conception of economic citizenship values humans (Sober Giecek, 2007), critiques inequality (Neumann, 2015), dialogues with others (Lucey & Grant,



2010), promotes an ethics of public welfare (Schank & Lorch, 2014), and considers the power dynamics at stake in market interactions (Davies, 2002) all in order for economic citizens to understand how to fundamentally alter their world.

### **Dominant and Counter Pedagogies in Economics**

Whether economics is intended to promote social roles, further explicate historical and current events, or promote citizenship, the methods that are used to teach are as important as the justifications for teaching (Dewey, 1916). Thus, assumptions about what knowledge is of most worth as well as the nature of knowledge are built into pedagogy. It is no surprise then, that neoclassical economics typically is taught via traditional, top-down, and conservative pedagogy. Troubling this paradigm means troubling the pedagogy of economics with methods that disrupt the status quo. While studies on common methods for teaching economics nearly all come to the conclusion that economics teaching methods have not changed much in the past decades, there is a wealth of material available that counters traditional pedagogy in the economics classroom. These approaches are not necessarily ‘critical’ in their analysis of the economic order, but do represent a move from behaviorist to constructivist approaches (Scheurman, 1998) in economics, and thus offer teachers an alternative to the dominant methods that have traditionally reinforced the neoclassical paradigm.

### ***Dominant methods***

Economics has, more than nearly any other social studies subdiscipline, utilized direct instruction as the primary pedagogical method (Knowles & Theobald, 2013). This

is the case as early as middle school (Vargha, 2004), and continues up through high school (Knowles & Theobald, 2013), and at the university (Watts & Schaur, 2011). In a review of literature by Varum, Ferreira, and Breda (2013) from the early 1990s to 2010, their analysis concludes that “lecturing is still the method more frequently used but there seems to be an increasing awareness and use of non-traditional methods” (p. 81) to teach economics. The emphasis on quantitative analysis in economics partially explains the failure to move beyond lecture. Economic educators are often concerned with ‘effectiveness’, defined as student achievement on standardized economic exams. Despite limited state and federal requirements for economics testing (Council for Economic Education, 2016), “no single area in the social studies has been as rigorously and quantitatively analyzed as the teaching and learning of economics at the pre-college, especially high school” (S. Miller & VanFossen, 2008, p. 293). The existence and prevalence of these normed exams means that instructional methods are often evaluated on the basis of their success in improving student scores. Even though several studies exist that evaluate the effectiveness of different approaches, their findings tend to be mixed (S. Miller & VanFossen, 2008; Walstad & Watts, 2015), and while there are some differences in student performance on exams when exposed to different methods, “there is not agreement on the sources of the differences” (Varum et al., 2013, p. 82). Therefore, if lecture is just as ‘effective’ as any other method at improving student performance, instructors are unlikely to implement alternatives.

These quantitative justifications are not necessarily what instructors at the university level use to explain their teaching. As Goffe and Kauper (2014) find in their

survey of economics instructors, instructors who feel that lecture is the “most effective instructional method are not very familiar with the pedagogical literature” (p. 371), and those who “feel that lecture is an inferior instructional method but nonetheless cost-effective, time costs (both coverage and preparation time) are leading rationales” (p. 371-372). These two groups represent 33% and 28% of instructors, respectively, meaning the majority of instructors utilize lecture and do so for reasons beyond the quantitative results of efficacy literature.

If economics is well-studied with respect to student achievement on normed and standardized exams, and instructional methods do not account for varying levels of performance broadly speaking, why move beyond traditional ‘chalk and talk’ (Becker & Watts, 2001) methods? The nature of the neoclassical paradigm would maintain this instructional emphasis given its emphasis on rationality, empiricism, and behaviorist ways of knowing the world, but questioning the philosophical and interpersonal basis for the direct instruction or ‘banking’ model (Freire, 1993) means questioning the power dynamic that is installed via lecture and the dehumanizing effect that may result from its omnipresence.

### ***Counter methods***

Alternatives to ‘chalk and talk’ abound in the economics education literature and demonstrate that economics educators need only to rethink their instructional emphases to find opportunities to alter instructional practices. While, again, these methods may not demonstrate ‘effectiveness’ in a quantitative fashion on normed exams, they do offer an opportunity to rethink the nature of teaching, both to be more engaging to students, and to be more applicable to students’ lives and community. These are not necessarily ‘critical’

approaches, but instead represent more constructivist approaches that offer a stepping stone for teachers looking to counter the dominant pedagogy in economics education.

A number of studies seek to engage K-16 students in economics through the use of a variety of art forms. Music lyrics can be used to supplement lecture as an instructional approach, and may be effective, though choice of content and selection of music is important (McClough & Heinfeldt, 2012). Music can also be used to supplement economic conceptions of justice (Lucey & Laney, 2009), and hip-hop can be used to explore ideas of success, entrepreneurship, and economic literacy (Meacham, Anderson, & Correa, 2013). Literature forms can also be effective means of instruction. Johnson (2012) used poetry to enhance student understanding of economic decision making. Novels can be effective tools to teach about labor markets (Vachris & Bohanon, 2012), and movies and television shows offer a wealth of ways to introduce economic concepts (Hall, Peck, & Podemska-Mikluch, 2016; Sexton, 2006).

In-class games and simulations have long been a tool of economic instruction that enhances student engagement (WitSchönke & Maria, 2013). Games and competitions can help students experience abstract concepts such as supply and demand (Alden, 2003), scarcity (Marks & Davis, 2006), the labor market (Alden, 2004), commodities markets (WitSchönke & Maria, 2013), and trade (Alden, 2005). Finally, classroom experiments that model trade, investments, or auctions can take the form of games and help simulate economic conditions, allowing students to experience economic conditions firsthand (Hawtrey, 2007; McKinnon, 1996).

Instructional technology can also be used to enhance student engagement in economics classes. Whether students are creating their own podcasts (Call, Hofer, & Swan, 2009), making use of video scrapbooking (Al-Bahrani, Dowell, & Patel, 2016), developing iPod playlists for historic economists (Van Horn & Van Horn, 2013), or using Twitter and other forms of social media (Al-Bahrani & Patel, 2015), students who engage with economics via the mediums they are most familiar with will be more likely to see the relevance and meaning in economics, collaborate with one another, and “engage students and increase students interest in the discipline” (Al-Bahrani & Patel, 2015, p. 65).

Constructivist counter approaches to dominant, behaviorist approaches can go beyond stimulating interest, and in fact the most significant reason to move past ‘chalk and talk’ might be the ability to take learning from conceptual and abstract knowledge within the classroom, and into the practical and situated world outside (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989), whether that be the halls of the school, the neighborhood, or the world at large. Project- and problem-based learning, for instance, can start students upon a path where they analyze businesses in real-world contexts (Ghosh, 2013) or “confront a problem that, through investigation, research, and cooperative input, allows for more than one solution” (Maxwell, Bellisimo, & Mergendoller, 2001, p. 75). These approaches begin to take economics education into the real-world, but still lack an action component to allow students to make real changes.

Service learning is perhaps the best developed base of literature that takes economic education beyond traditional methods and into an active pedagogy with real

application outside the classroom (Hervani & Helms, 2004). McGoldrick's (1998) call to implement service-learning in economic classrooms builds on the critique that passive, instructor-centered pedagogy is inherently discriminatory to certain groups and is predicated on Dewey (1938/1997) and Trepp's (1939) notion that individuals should learn from the environment they experience. Therefore, the use of a "participatory, active learning technique that allows for contextual presentation and subsequent learning of economic theory through concrete experiences . . . provides a forum for the integration of diversity (such as race and gender issues)" (McGoldrick, 1998, p. 368) as well as a way for students to apply their learning to issues they are concerned about in a form of praxis (Freire, 1993). Service learning approaches have been utilized as early as elementary school to allow students to take action against poverty in their community (Fox, 2010), up through the collegiate level as the core of an economics course (Greenwood, 2002). Service learning has been used to teach students about and allow students to address issues as diverse as the relationship between cities and schools (McKoy, Stern, & Bierbaum, 2010), poverty and access to health care (Caplan, 2002), collaborate with communities in foreign countries (Clark, 2002), and develop connections between colleges and high schools (Lopez, 2009).

Counter pedagogies that engage students via music, literature, games, or technology, and active learning approaches such as problem-based learning or service learning are significant improvements over direct instruction in terms of their ability to engage students and be relevant to their lives. While most research indicates these pedagogies are not in use, a fuller understanding of the way economics is taught requires

attention to the content embedded in the economics curriculum, the way that students engage that content, and their perspectives and understanding of economics issues beyond simply their performance on tests of economic literacy.

### **Student Conceptions of Economic Content**

While this study does not investigate student conceptualizations of economics, focusing instead on preservice teachers, the limited preparation for teaching economics described in the literature above signifies that most preservice teachers will be learning economics as they teach. Therefore, an understanding of the literature that explores student conceptualizations of economic content might enhance understanding of the conceptualizations of these preservice teachers.

Traditional methods of exploring student learning involve utilizing standardized exams that correlate with neoclassical economic fundamentals to test economic literacy. While an understanding of student understanding and competency on these exams is important, a measurement is only as strong as the metric it is based on. Therefore, rather than explore the wealth of literature surrounding student understanding of ‘core economic concepts’ (or lack thereof) that conform to dominant narratives within the discipline, this section analyzes literature that deals with student attitudes toward economic concepts to better understand places to trouble the dominant narrative. While S. Miller and Vanfossen (2008) claimed in their review of literature that “[a] number of studies” (p. 296) deal with student economic attitudes, they cite only two (Phipps & Clark, 1993; Schug & Walstad, 1991), one of which was the previous handbook chapter, thus more recent and more

wide-ranging literature must be explored to fully understand student attitudes toward economics and economic concepts. Unfortunately the limited literature base includes only a few studies that look at student conceptualizations, though they run the gamut from kindergarten to college and from the United States to Europe.

Students as early as elementary school have beliefs about economic concepts. Phipps (1996) interviewed 80 elementary students from third through fifth grade to determine their attitudes about income, work, and human capital. The vast majority of students reported that they could earn money from productive effort, such as work or chores. They were also able to illustrate ways that adults received income from loans, jobs, inheritance, government assistance, and illicit means. Additionally, “children in the sample from lower-income households demonstrated awareness of more alternative income sources than did the children from higher-income households” (p. 184). Students were also able to talk about future careers and elaborate on reasons for choosing that career. Responses differed along gender lines in this theme, as girls were more likely to be motivated by altruism in career choice than boys. Finally, students were less likely to be able to explain the human capital they would need to attain to qualify for their ideal jobs, but older students were more likely than younger students to be able to describe the education, training, and skills they would need to get the job they wanted. This study is important for two reasons. One, students as early as elementary school have well-developed attitudes about economic concepts, an important finding given the relative lack of economics instruction in elementary grades (Halvorsen, 2013). Two, as early as third grade, student attitudes about economics seem to correlate with neoclassical views on the



economy. Admittedly, this is in large part due to the epistemological framing of the research question, but it deserves attention nonetheless.

Similar findings regarding the relationship between student attitude and neoclassical fundamentals are demonstrated in Davies' (2011) review of literature regarding student conceptions of price, value, and opportunity cost. Literature on the concept of price shows students conceive of price reflecting intrinsic worth from an early age. By age twelve, they have begun to internalize price as a reflection of supply and demand combining. Conversely, research on the concept of opportunity cost demonstrates that students struggle to grasp the neoclassical conception of opportunity cost, in some cases performing "significantly worse than might be expected if they had all chose answers at random" (p. 105). Davies concludes that the literature surrounding student conceptions of these concepts indicates an issue of epistemological framing, Davies suggests that to better understand student attitudes, researchers should ask about a 'fair price,' or ask which goods and services should be free, or ask what items or resources are beyond price. In terms of opportunity cost, research should consider different ways to understand choice and different ways of understanding value. The strong internalization of neoclassical views on price, and the weak internalization of neoclassical views of opportunity cost indicate focal areas for questioning preservice teacher conceptions, and his alternative framings can help better grasp student conceptions of these concepts.

At the university level, economics majors have been surveyed regarding their attitudes about the major itself, which helps to understand the way they think about

concepts and goals of economics. Overall, 78 percent of students were satisfied or highly satisfied with the major (Jones, Hoest, Fuld, Dahal, & Colander, 2009). When asked what they learned in their major, the most common response was ‘the economic way of thinking’, and the least common was ‘economic literature’ with 89 percent indicating they learned the former and 38 percent indicating the latter. When asked how successful the major was at achieving Derek Bok’s (2006) eight goals for a liberal college education, they rated the major as most successful in engendering critical thinking, and least successful in enhancing moral reasoning and preparing students to live with diversity. Given that students are satisfied with their major, it can safely be concluded that most economics students are happy with coursework that emphasizes the neoclassically aligned ‘economic way of thinking’ and are unlikely to be exposed to alternatives in economic literature where they exist in limited form. Additionally, this shows that students conceptualize economics as satisfactory when it promotes critical thinking and are not concerned with its struggle to address morals or issues of diversity.

The largest recent body of literature surrounding student conceptualizations of economic concepts has grown out of an exploration of issues of the global economy and the recent global financial crisis, however most of these studies occurred outside the United States. For example, in a German study, secondary students conceptualized globalization as a “climate or environmental phenomenon” (Lange, Fischer, Fischer, & Kleinschmidt, 2014, p. 132) while in grammar schools they thought of it in political terms. Overall in this study, students who “associate economic aspects with the concept ‘globalisation’ assess the developments described by them in a positive way, usually

describing consumption benefits or enhancements to international cooperation. Another major global issue deals with the economic competition between China and the United States. A Chinese study found that Chinese students have extensive knowledge of the United States' "history, geography, socioeconomic system, and education, and they obtain the knowledge from multiple media sources besides social studies curriculum" (Zhao, Zhou, & Huang, 2008, p. 13). They also admire the American socioeconomic system, yet resent its interference in Chinese and global affairs. These studies of student conceptions of global issues demonstrate that context matters when addressing student conceptions of economic issues, and the age, experience, and nationality of students must be explored concurrently with an exploration of their ideas of these economic concepts.

Nationality matters when discussing student attitudes about the global financial crisis. In Germany, arguably the most successful European country at managing and moving beyond the crisis (Kulish, 2010), students blamed "'greedy buyers' and 'amoral' speculators, an irresponsible investment banking policy, as well as lacking state control of the financial system" (Klee & Lutter, 2010, p. 63) as the perpetrators of the economic collapse. Further studies show that countries hit hard by the crisis, such as Greece, have a higher student understanding of concepts concerning the crisis than the United States (Pliakis, Digkas, Bousiou-Makridou, & Tsopoglou, 2013), and that context-specific concerns arise out of these global issues, such as the wave of migration in Cyprus leading to student concerns over growing multiculturalism (Vryonides, 2014). These international studies should spur further efforts to better contextualize student conceptions of economics and economic phenomena, especially as researchers look for new ways to

investigate conceptions outside the traditional neoclassical concepts that have been explored in previous research.

## **DOMINANT NARRATIVES IN SCHOOLS AND SOCIAL STUDIES**

Schools and the teaching of the social studies are embedded in an ideology that promotes a dominant narrative that maintains white supremacy, patriarchy, nationalism, and neoliberalism (Apple, 2004; Au, 2012; Chandler, 2015; DeLeon & Ross, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2003a; McLaren, 2015; Schmeichel, 2011). These forces are at work in the dominant narrative of economics, economic education, and teacher education, and thus require a fundamental exploration of their core tenets and ramifications.

### **Ideology and Schools**

Apple (2004) describes three significant elements of ideology upon which the majority of theorists agree. In the broadest sense, ideology deals with legitimization, or “the justification of group action and its social acceptance” (p. 19). Ideology always deals with a power conflict between those holding power and those seeking it, and is always at stake whether those involved acknowledge it or not. Finally, ideology is characterized by a style of argument, or “special rhetoric” that is “highly explicit and relatively systematic” (p. 19). While many theorists may debate specific components of ideology, the use of these three broad elements enhances the ability to consider the manifestation of ideology in schools in terms of race, gender, culture, and neoliberalism.

### ***Racial ideology***

The above three elements appear in the way that schools maintain a white racial norm, both historically and in the present. Traditionally, schools have only legitimated white forms of geography, science language, literature, arts, law, medicine, and history. They have been run by white people, and offered only superficial control to people of color, and their rhetoric has been that of white culture which “trains the Negro to be white and at the same time convinces him of the impropriety or the impossibility of his becoming white” (Woodson, 1933/2006, p. 19). Contemporary ideology legitimates scientific questions that ask about “what does or does not exist” (Leonardo, 2009, p. 33). In the case of race, while race is not a biologically sound construction, it’s “modes of existence are real” (Leonardo, 2009, p. 41), and thus the structure of schools enforces a power dynamic of institutional racism. Racial ideology is not necessarily promoted via an overt style of argument, however, and often exists in the unconscious and contributes to a phenomenon of “racism without any racists” (Bonilla-Silva, 2010).

### ***Gendered ideology***

The ideology behind schooling and education has historically maintained male supremacy (Wollstonecraft, 1792/1982), and continues today, even as liberal feminist work has worked to document the “biases and distortions of texts and the sexism that underlies such practices as course and career counseling for girls and boys” (Weiler, 1988, pp. 27–28) and de-legitimate some of the more overt forms of sexism. The problem with these advancements, again, is that they tend to ignore the fact that sexism does not disappear when as many women as men are steered into science careers. In fact, liberal

feminism “has tended to ignore the depth of sexism in power relationships and the relationship of gender and class” (p. 28). This failure to recognize the power dynamic at play denies more redistributive possibilities by silencing any potential talk of economic remuneration (Fraser, 2005).

### ***Cultural ideology***

Early schooling sought to inculcate students into a specifically ‘American’ culture, legitimating white, Anglo, Christian, middle-class norms as ‘American’ and deculturalizing Native Americans (Spring, 2001) and immigrants alike (Tyack, 1974). By giving middle-class and elite children a cultural leg up in schools, and requiring that students outside the norm learn these cultural values, power is constantly at work ensuring the success of those who conform to the ‘American’ culture (Bourdieu, 1974). This culture is enforced both via the habitat, or “the history which has accumulated over the passage of time in things, machines, buildings monuments, books, theories, customs, law, etc.” (Bourdieu, 1981, p. 305) and via the habitus, “a system of durably acquired schemes of perception, thought and action, engendered by objective conditions but tending to persist even after an alteration of those conditions” (p. 305).

### ***Ideology and neoliberalism***

Finally, neoliberalism holds ideological sway in the American school system via the legitimization of schools as “an adjunct of the labor market, and subset of the economy, couching their analysis in the technocratic language of human capital theory” (McLaren, 2015, p. 15). This means that schools themselves are profit centers, and thus a market

free of government involvement should arise, which will inherently benefit those with the existing economic and social capital to succeed in cornering the market on good schools (Apple, 2004). These neoliberal reforms rest on the idea that “[t]he world is intensely competitive economically, and students - as future workers - must be given the requisite skills and dispositions to compete efficiently and effectively” (p. 32).

## **Ideology and Social Studies**

### ***Social studies and race***

Social Studies has a long history of promoting a dominant narrative of white supremacy at the expense of nonwhite and indigenous people (Takaki, 2008). In the earliest era of common schooling, black students in the South were presented with textbooks that contained almost an exclusively white history of America, and the integrated texts of the North contained “slurs and outright lies” (Zimmerman, 2004, p. 47) about their history and place in society. While eventually the slurs were removed and some non-white inclusion took place, the extended fight to be represented in some way lead to the “iron law of American textbook politics – offend no one” (p. 67) and giant history tomes that included everything but a critical review of America’s racial past. Elsewhere, textbook analyses revealed white supremacist attitudes that attempted to deculturalize Mexican and Mexican American students (Spring, 1992), overlooked the discrimination Asian minorities encountered, particularly with respect to immigration (Zuercher, 1969), and included indigenous people only when illustrating their “primitive life and savage warfare” (Loewen, 2008, p. 94). This failure of the curriculum to

accurately reflect American history caused a wave of resistance to integrated history and the pursuit of disciplinary curriculum that was specific to other cultural experience in America (Zimmerman, 2002), setting the stage for a multicultural curriculum that included these histories as part of a broader American story.

The backlash against this new multiculturalism led to an increased attention to Eurocentrism at the expense of the history and ideas of people of color during the culture wars of the 1990s (Buras, 2008). Schwartz (1992) defines Eurocentrism as

an ideology or body of myths, symbols, ideas, and practices that exclusively or predominantly values the worldview and cultural manifestations (e.g., history, politics, art, language, music, literature, technology, economics, etc.) of people of European origin, and that denigrates and subordinates the cultural manifestations of people from all other lands of origin (p. 342)

In the curriculum, these ‘master narratives’ were present in the way the system of slavery was characterized, descriptions of the abolition movement, and the minimization of “the reign of terror waged against Black people in many southern states following the Civil War” (p. 352) in the curriculum about reconstruction. Elsewhere, Ellis Island was portrayed as “the quintessential American Experience” (Joyce King, 1992, p. 326) and distills the African slave trade to ‘forced immigration’ and indigenous people as the ‘first immigrants’. These troubling analogies were left unquestioned and failed to account for the “historical continuity of African Americans, Native Americans and the indigenous peoples now known as Chicanos, Hispanics, or Latinos, who did not come to America in search of material gain or freedom but were conquered by European American settlers” (p. 326). Throughout the culture wars, theorists such as Hirsch (1993) pushed their Eurocentric ‘core knowledge’ while historians such as Schlesinger “argued that students



should be united around a set of core values derived from white Anglo-American Protestant traditions” (Spring, 2016, p. 144). Instead of a focus on the experiences of oppression that non-white groups encountered, Hirsch, Schlesinger, and other conservatives argued that their ‘core values’ “provided the impetus for correcting these wrongs, including the abolition of slavery, the extension of political rights to women, and the civil rights campaigns by African Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Asian Americans” (p. 144). This rhetoric was explicitly critiqued by scholars who analyzed the treatment of Asian Americans (Romanowski, 1995), Native Americans (Axtell, 1987), and Latinos (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998) in both the formal curriculum and the history of American education.

Social studies still tells lies about race (Ladson-Billings, 2003b) yet race still matters (Howard, 2004; West, 1994). The standards movement, begun in the late 1990s, became the dominant curricular focus in American education, particularly after No Child Left Behind became law and created a national system of accountability for standard adherence. This essentially unified the curriculum with the structure of schools as schools scrambled to teach to the test in order to avoid punitive measures (Au, 2007). The impact of these standards in Social Studies maintained the dominant theme of white supremacy that has plagued the discipline since the progressive era in standards and in textbooks. State standards have been found to ignore the history and culture of Mexico, Latin America, and the third world (Noboa, 2012); textbooks only include Arab- and Muslim-Americans in times of conflict (Eraqi, 2015); and Native Americans are generally included in the curriculum only in “their position and construction as perpetrators of

violence” (Craig & Davis, 2015, p. 91). With respect to African-Americans, an analysis of the Social Studies standards in nine states with end-of-course exams by Journell (2008) found that most states “focus on instances and individuals associated with African American oppression or liberation and largely avoid societal and cultural contributions” (p. 40). This minimal codification of the contribution of Black culture holds greater significance in an environment where teachers are fearful of departing from the required curriculum that is tied to high-stakes exams (Vogler & Virtue, 2007). “Consequently, the way African Americans are represented in state standards may influence the way teachers portray African American history to their students” (Journell, 2008, p. 47). Analysis of Texas 11<sup>th</sup> Grade US History standards through a CRT lens shows “limited knowledge about race, racism, and communities of color” (Vasquez Heilig, Brown, & Brown, 2012, p. 419). Racial content that did exist took the form of individuals relegated to a status that “is presumed less pivotal and less important” (p. 412), and often “obscure[d] the function of race and racial projects in the U.S. historical narrative” (p. 413). In Georgia, Candis (2013) found “standards that minimize race” to the benefit of capital and religion, “the primary cultural indicators” (p. 122) in the standards under study. In sum, as Sleeter (2002) writes after an analysis of the ‘deep structure’ of Californian standards

It is difficult to identify cultural strengths and resources of groups other than Western European and Euro-American men because the [standards] continually stress the enduring value of their ideas alone. In so doing, the greatest way in which it dismisses the strengths of marginalized communities is in its failure to use ideas and insights that originate within other communities (p. 22)

Historically and presently, the narrative of social studies in the United States enshrines white culture as the only culture of value, ignoring or demeaning the historical contributions of nonwhite people.

### ***Social studies and gender***

As deMarris (2000) asserts in her analysis of gender in schools, “[c]urrent school structures are based on hierarchical patriarchal models” (p. 168). Teachers who want to challenge these patriarchal norms must contend with a curricular landscape that nearly removes women from the curriculum entirely, enforces a binary gender dynamic (Engebretson, 2014), or normalizes them into the domestic sphere while providing little in the way of support for including women in more authentic ways. In addition to privileging male ways of being in classrooms (Henry, 2010), there is an absence of women in the curriculum (Loewen, 2008) or limited appearances “whether or not their presence is relevant” (Noddings, 1992, p. 230), in some cases even garnering inclusion “for achievements that would go unrecognized if the subjects were male” (p. 230-231). This limited or trivialized inclusion of women in the formal curriculum means that preservice Social Studies teachers often have limited or negligible familiarity with women, and have to contend with a socialization process designed to ‘other’ women from the male norm (Lorber, 2003).

The omission and trivialization of women is compounded by curriculum that binds women to the home (Schmidt, 2012) in ways that normalize whiteness, middle class lifestyles, and heterosexuality. Women “are valuable to the labour force when it

needs them. Women's work is predicated on external necessity and seems to preclude an internal desire of women to participate" (p. 716). Women are also often placed in the political arena in ways that ignore the radical history of the women's movement and instead emphasize "the rhetoric of women as caretakers and moral barometers" (p. 717), thus further domesticizing and normalizing both women and femininity.

For preservice teachers exposed to this curriculum, or even for teacher educators preparing to counter the patriarchal curriculum, there is a challenge in confronting the narrative and finding materials that disrupt the patriarchy in a critical feminist fashion, as Schmeichel (2015) found when analyzing hundreds of articles that included instruction descriptors. She found very few (33) with gender descriptors, and fewer still (16) that were specific lesson plans with a focus on women. Of these lessons, half were focused on technical skills, several were designed to balance the curriculum in terms of gender, and only one was designed to work toward gender equity. Also, when analyzing the text of the lessons, there were "no references to gender bias, feminism, patriarchy, or sexism . . . [and] the word 'feminist' appears twice but only in references" (p. 15).

The above pattern is an example of recognition and representation, common themes addressed by second-wave feminism, but they fail to account for redistribution necessary for true equality (Fraser, 2005). There is also a need to address intersectional feminism, as Vickery (2015) demonstrates in her consideration of black feminist citizenship among teachers. This can be part of a broader project of feminist pedagogy that "asks students to connect various injustices to each other in order to help ensure that one group's liberation does not come at the expense of another's" (Engebretson & Hollet,

2017, p. 124) and focuses on economic redistribution in a democratic way. Even as the dominant narrative of exclusion of women is troubled, its complexity in terms of intersectionality and material reparation is ignored and thus hinders a truly feminist narrative in social studies.

### ***Social studies and culture***

Social Studies has a long legacy of denying the cultural value of any non-Anglo, English-speaking groups and promoting an ‘American’ culture that in effect deculturalizes groups outside this norm (Spring, 2016), and these “historical issues of cultural and linguistic genocide, and educational segregation, are still alive in the twenty-first century” (p. 137). For instance, The curriculum “neglect[s] the diverse histories and experiences of Indigenous peoples, often oversimplifying and stereotypically articulating the profoundly complicated subject of Indigenous education policies” (Shear, 2015, p. 34). Relatedly, textbooks continue this marginalization by “positioning Indigenous peoples as violent [which] serves the material purposes of supporting colonizing practices that do not allow Indigenous people to experience full sovereignty” (Craig & Davis, 2015, p. 114). Social studies, when exploring cultural groups outside the norm, still also practices orientalism, or the exoticization of non-Anglo cultural groups and regions (Said, 1979). Orientalism is alive and well in the treatment of Arab-Americans as violent and monolithic in Social Studies curricular materials which ignores the “inherent linguistic, religious, social and cultural diversity found in the Arab world” (Lucey, Yoder, Johnson, & Karam, 2016, p. 64).

Further, culture has become monolithic in many social studies classes as early as elementary school (Brophy & Alleman, 2015), and thus explorations of culture conform to overt boundaries where religion, language, rituals, practices, food and other cultural markers are defined by rigid borders, and none of the inherent hybridity of culture (Gonzalez, 2006). This is a particularly problematic component of the dominant narrative in areas of the United States where borders have jumped people, and cultural hybridity is the norm (Anzaldúa, 1999). Unfortunately the mandated narrative of social studies has denied the culture of non-Anglo people in areas like the Southwest (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998), among Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders (Coloma, 2006), and with respect to indigenous people (Rains, 2003).

### ***Social studies and neoliberalism***

Historically, while there was a clear push to assimilate immigrants into American culture via language and customs (Tyack, 1974), there was also a push to ensure that these immigrants and other products of the school system would fit the needs of the booming industrial age. By emphasizing efficiency, productivity, standardization and compliance, the structure of schools altered the very nature of education, moving away from an idea of human growth and understanding of the world to an idea of job market preparation and vocational training (Shepard, 2000). Because urbanization and industrialization were exploding, new forms of school management and layers of bureaucracy were required (Rury, 2005), an effort supported by “[b]usiness and other fiscally conservative elements in society” (p. 155) who were often opposed by organized

labor. The mission of these reforms was to build “an educational system that was both rationally organized and cost-effective” (p. 155), and thus vital to a capitalist economy. This organization took the form of an increase in tracking and testing (Rury, 2005), an emphasis on the scientific method (Bobbit, 2004), rigid curricular objectives (Tyler, 2004), and the fulfillment of the purpose of many progressives to have the high school become “the key link between the nation’s education system and the labor market” (Rury, 2005, p. 166) and to produce graduates who were “punctual, deferential, and obedient” (Reese, 1999, p. 261).

The curriculum of the Progressive era was also designed to promote capitalism and insure the racial order. As discussed earlier, the structure and bureaucracy of schools was set up to churn out ready-made compliant workers using social efficiency to “solve the problems of industrialization and urbanization” (Shepard, 2000, p. 95), and the curriculum used in schools backed these goals up (i.e. Bobbit, 2004; Tyler, 2004). Schools were replete with trade training, manual training, industrial education, practical training, and vocational training (Kliebard, 2004) which became the “the most successful curricular innovation in the twentieth century in the sense that none other approached it in the range of support it received and the extent to which it became implemented into the curriculum of American schools” (p. 127). Simultaneously, the prevailing attitude of white superiority that lead to segregated schools also lead to a curriculum in schools that served students of color that deemphasized academics and promoted manual labor training (Wagoner Jr & Urban, 2008). Rury (2005) describes how this emphasis did not coincide with labor force needs because the new managerial economy required white-

collar skills, which were absent from the curriculum causing “the nation’s Black population to miss out on this crucial step in the human capital revolution” (p. 174). Similar circumstances were evident in the schooling experiences of Mexican American students (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998) who were given a curriculum that emphasized assimilation at the expense of their heritage and vocational training for manual labor at the expense of academic growth.

The equation of ‘western-ness’ with American identity is pervasive in racial and ethnic issues (McCarthy, 1990), but also extends to issues of individualism which propped up a neoliberal agenda. To be American was to be an individual, and the curriculum focused on the biographies of great leaders at the expense of collectives (Swartz, 1992). This has the tendency to inhibit class consciousness and an understanding of ‘social totality’ (Joyce King, 1992) in the economy. The current neoliberal social structure which uses “political structures and social ideology to accelerate the pursuit of self-gain over the common good” (Schmeichel, 2011, p. 10) constrains meaningful social studies teaching by enhancing a bureaucratic and conservative conception of schooling that promotes competition and performance on standardized exams (Cornbleth, 2015). Post-financial crisis education has continued to include “approaches to citizenship, economic, and social studies teaching . . . rooted in notions of control and oppression” (Lucey, Agnello, et al., 2016, p. 172), which continues the centuries-old modernist, neoliberal drive to take public education and transform it “into an adjunct of corporate power . . . within a broader play of power, ideology, and other social forces that bear down in anti-democratic ways on the purpose of schooling and the practice of teaching itself” (Giroux, 2017, p. 15).



## TEACHER EDUCATION AND PURPOSE

Despite the ideology and dominant narratives perpetuated by schools and social studies, teachers can be agents for change within these oppressive structures. However, resistance to domination requires more than the status quo in teacher preparation. It requires considerable attention to the role of purpose in the development of teachers. This section addresses teacher education literature and specifically social studies teacher education literature to understand how preservice teachers develop their purpose for the teaching of social studies.

By choosing to enter into a teacher preparation program, preservice teachers have indicated that they have a purpose. Richardson and Watt's (Richardson & Watt, 2016) review of literature points to reasons for choosing the vocation of teaching as varied as:

the desire for social mobility, the influence of parents and extended family, time compatibility, the need for a stimulating absorbing career, an ability to influence others, the desire to work with young children and adolescents, to work in a people-oriented profession, and job-related benefits such as security, pensions and vacations. (p. 283)

While the mere act of selecting teaching as a potential career and pursuing the education necessary to gain employment in the field signifies an underlying reason for teaching, purpose can shift as preservice teachers encounter material in their preparation program, enter into field experiences, and eventually begin teaching professionally (Ovens, Garbett, & Hutchinson, 2016). By centralizing the explicit development of preservice teachers' nascent purposes, social studies teacher educators can foster a healthy and sustaining purpose even in the face of the challenging constraints of the teaching profession (Blevins & Talbert, 2015; L. King & Chandler, 2015). Purpose must be at the core of both content and pedagogy used in a teacher preparation program, and it must

attend to prevailing themes of the era in a humanizing way (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2016; hooks, 1994).

### **Social Justice Teacher Education**

Centering purpose in teacher education requires an analysis of what teacher education is for. Specifically, a critical, humanizing teacher education program should promote theoretical orientations such as social justice. While “the term ‘social justice’ is used generously throughout teacher education programmes” it has been used “with ill-defined meaning, often functioning more as emotionally evocative slogan than substantive guide” (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2016, p. 463). The following elements are included in this umbrella of terms, but a more substantive framework is necessary to avoid ambiguity. Social justice teacher education begins with “the recognition that teachers face equity, diversity and social justice issues daily, whether or not they recognize or address them” (Kitchen & Petrarca, 2016, p. 159). Social justice teacher education can make use of critical pedagogy to begin to generate themes, read the world for these themes and address them through problem-posing education (Kincheloe, 2005). Elements of social justice teacher education include interrogating the complexities of culture and promoting multiculturalism (Banks & Banks, 2010), developing participatory, democratic education practices (Gutmann, 1999), culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014), and anti-racist education (Au, 2009).

Chubbuck and Zembylas (2016) in their review of literature on social justice teacher education, explore a number of specific frameworks that attempt to more strictly

define social justice teacher education. Nancy Fraser's model for social justice is particularly instructive for teacher educators as it "highlights the multidimensionality of injustice and the multiple complexities in achieving participatory parity by analytically distinguishing . . . three types of structural inequality" (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2016, p. 470). These include the economic dimension (Fraser, 1997), or "the (mal)distribution of resources, rights, and opportunities" (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2016, p. 471); the cultural dimension (Fraser, 1997), or the "way people's attributes are valued or devalued" (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2016, p. 471); and the political dimension (Fraser, 2005, 2008), or "representation/misrepresentation" (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2016, p. 472) of people and their relative ability to participate in the decisions that affect them. These three dimensions of social justice are necessary components of a teacher education platform that seeks to bring about a more just society. Yet, without a consideration of why teachers teach, and how purpose manifests in a disciplinary context, these powerful frameworks will not reach their transformative potential.

### **Reasons for Teaching**

Teachers enter the profession for reasons as varied as their backgrounds, and while it is "difficult to make generalizations about teacher beliefs, beyond the importance of acknowledging the beliefs they bring with them to the teacher education experience" (Adler, 2008, p. 346), some attention has been paid to intergroup differences in reasons for teaching that serve as a foundation for understanding purpose. Zumwalt & Craig (2009), for example find that women and men have similar reasons for teaching, however men are more likely to have joined due to love of a subject or a particular teacher, and women are more likely to be influenced by family. Teachers of color are more likely than

whites to have entered the profession due to the value of education to society and they are also more likely to express pride in the profession, a feeling that tends to grow throughout their preparation program. While all groups of teachers have been found to choose teaching for altruistic reasons, “minority students were more likely to subscribe to social reconstructionist or activist notions of teaching” (p. 128) a sentiment especially concentrated among those who had poor educational experiences. Given that teaching is a profession unique in the familiarity that it’s future practitioners have with the system in general (Beck & Kosnik, 2014) (i.e., many future lawyers have never been involved with the legal system, whereas all future teachers have been educated for well over a decade in some form of school system) consideration of these experiences is vital to students of all backgrounds as teacher educators seek to understand and engage the purpose of preservice teachers throughout their preparation (Hawley, Crowe, & Brooks, 2012).

### **Teacher Purpose**

Purpose is more than simply why someone enters teaching, however, and it represents more than the ubiquitous ‘teaching philosophy’ that many preservice teachers write. A teacher’s purpose (or alternatively, their rationale, philosophical stance, or teaching vision) represents the moral and ethical dimensions of teaching (Dinkelman, 2009), and should be constantly reflected upon, with the idea being that “good teachers are always in the process of developing their rationales, as they commit themselves to continual examination of the ways in which theory and practice speak to each other in the unique context of each teaching moment” (p. 92). Beck and Kosnik (2014) outline the

components of such a vision necessary for teacher growth by considering the way teachers see their role, the relevance of learning, curricular priorities, pedagogical priorities, classroom and community dynamics, inclusion and equity, and work-life balance. Each of these components overlaps, and each is essential if teachers are to fully understand their role in schools and society and to make purposeful choices based on these understandings. One way of exploring this complex and multilayered conception of purpose within a teacher education program comes from Hollins' (2015) work on rethinking field experiences via a clinical rotation model. This focused inquiry includes an introspective narrative about preservice teachers' beliefs about school, an analysis of literature on teacher ideology, consideration of philosophical stance during observation, and the critical analysis of curriculum and pedagogy. This in-depth exploration is necessary to flesh out the complexities of purpose and the intricate ways it affects teaching. Further, it points to the way that attention to purpose must be integrated into a variety of facets within teacher education in order to support preservice teacher's growth and sustain them into their first year of teaching.

### ***Reflection on purpose***

While some have claimed that critical reflection into teacher purpose is beyond the grasp of preservice teachers due to experience and structural factors, Dinkleman (2000) shows how focused attention can help preservice teachers grasp the interplay between their purpose and the school structure they come in contact with as student teachers. While preservice teachers in his study demonstrated "far more consideration of the practical concerns of teaching" than reflection on purpose, they did consider "such

thinking central to the work of teaching” (p. 216). This finding demonstrates a willingness to focus on purpose even as the day to day ‘what’ and ‘how’ of teaching get in the way of ‘why’. Preservice teachers also were able to continue and grow in their critical reflection throughout the semesters in their teacher education program, despite having cooperating teachers described as “not especially helpful” in this pursuit. While the lack of professional models in the field who talk about and intentionally integrate purpose is disappointing, the fact that preservice teachers could continue thinking about purpose with only campus-centric support means that the goal of integrating purpose in a teacher education program is not quixotic, however a further understanding of the challenges preservice teachers face in taking their learning from the preparation program into the classroom might better illuminate the type of program that would be necessary to improve teaching and learning in social studies.

### ***Sustaining purpose***

Foregrounding purpose, especially a conceptualization of purpose as ever-changing and well-articulated, is necessary to avoid a number of pitfalls that can impede the realization of purpose as preservice teachers go through their preparation and into a classroom. Hawley (2010) looked at three social studies teachers who had articulated rationales for teaching prior to their first year of professionally teaching. In returning to these teachers as they made their way through their first year, he found that there was a systemic failure to help teachers recognize and grow their rationales. No one from the school administration or any fellow teacher talked about rationales or purposes for teaching, rather they focused on required curriculum and administrative oversight. They also struggled to maintain their unique sense of purpose when faced with the reality of

schooling leading to “a messy, non-linear process, in which the participants struggled to bring their goals to life” (p. 148). Finally, they failed to consult their rationales when planning, and when they did return to consider their rationales, they experienced ‘built-in guilt’ that they had fallen so far from their intended purposes. Despite these challenges, he found that written rationales “helped participants generate goals and objectives for their teaching, and served as a source for structured reflection” (p. 155). Elsewhere, Dinkelman’s (2009) work on the twelve challenges of rationale-based teacher education provide an excellent list of reasons why preservice social studies teachers struggle to develop a rationale and put it into action. From challenges of articulation, to fear of being wrong, to the excessive verbosity of teacher education literature, and questions of ontology, and values, these considerations should be addressed by any teacher educator trying to engender purpose in preservice teachers. The combined magnitude of these challenges insist upon a ground-up reworking of teacher education in order to ensure that purpose is at the beginning, middle, and end of the way teacher educators work with preservice teachers. While it would be ideal if that support would continue as they enter the teaching profession, there can be no guarantee that will happen. Thus, purpose or rationale-based teacher education must be fundamental and ever-present in a social studies teacher preparation program.

### ***Enacting purpose***

Hawley’s (2012) work on rationale-development serves as a guide to putting purpose into practice, and demonstrates why purpose must be central to a teacher

education program. His description of the research surrounding social studies teacher education shows that whether research focuses on content, high-stakes testing, or experiences, it has “missed an opportunity to examine why prospective teachers choose to teach social studies” (p. 3). Therefore, he proposes making purpose both the content and pedagogy of social studies teacher education. This means that purpose should be developed in methods courses where students can be pushed to “enact and develop their thinking about how to connect purpose with their practice” (p. 10). Purpose must be an integral part of the student teaching experience, and all stakeholders in this part of the process (preservice teachers, field supervisors, and cooperating teachers) should share an understanding that this is the time where “ideas of initial rationales become part of both planning and teaching” (p. 11). Finally, teacher educators must recognize their role as models of rationale-based practice. They must articulate their own rationales concomitantly with their preservice teachers and show the interaction between purpose and practice in their pedagogical and curricular choices. This wholesale infusion of purpose into every aspect of teacher preparation is necessary to avoid the challenges that will inevitably plague future teachers in an inhospitable school system. This system, though is an outgrowth of society, and thus the type of purpose that must be fostered in future social studies educators is one that is humanizing and attends to the core themes of the modern era. To that end, researchers have proposed centralizing race and neoliberalism as structures to be overcome within teacher education, thus giving direction to the blossoming rationales they stimulate.



## Critical Teacher Purpose and Social Studies

When teacher educators in social studies ask themselves about purpose; when they ask themselves ‘what for?’ they provide an “opportunity to rethink or reimagine the structures and practices of social studies teacher education” (Crowe & Cuenca, 2015, p. xxix). That question, “‘for what purpose’ . . . is the essence of emancipatory knowledge and the heart of humanizing pedagogy” (Blevins & Talbert, 2015, p. 28). Drawing on a Freirean (1993) notion that teachers and teacher educators should be co-learners as they seek to name the world, a humanizing teacher education program would seek out epochal themes and “act upon the reality within which these themes are generated” (Freire, 2005a, p. 5). Several examples of this critical conception of social studies teacher education demonstrate these notions of critical consciousness, or *conscientização* (Freire, 1993). Castro (2014) explored preservice social studies teachers’ adoption of tenets of critical multicultural citizenship and found that preservice teachers were critical of democracy and its promises and problems; however, the teacher education program itself affected their purpose in nuanced ways. While many of the preservice teachers’ prior beliefs were maintained throughout the program, they utilized a comparative-evaluative process to “actively mak[e] connections between prior experiences and instructional approaches of the teacher education program” (p. 195), they also took up instructional strategies, and critical vocabulary as they sought to make their teaching relevant and to disrupt dominant narratives. Developing a rationale for teaching that explicitly critiques neoliberalism is vital to moving from an information based system of education to a transformation based system (Blevins & Talbert, 2015). This critique must happen throughout a teacher education program as preservice teachers analyze their own schooling experience and how neoliberal education reforms have shaped “what it means to be a teacher and the practice of teaching” (p. 30), it must be addressed via a dialogic

relationship between the teacher and teacher educator, it must critique the official knowledge, and it must frame critical questions and introduce subjugated knowledge. In addition to critical conceptions of citizenship and a critique of neoliberalism, social studies teacher educators have outlined the challenges of attempting to engender critical consciousness as part of a transformative social studies teacher education program (Ukpokodu, 2003), including multicultural illiteracy, inability to connect social studies and multicultural perspectives, parochialism and ethnocentrism, resistance to a critical framework, and moving beyond ‘heroes-and-holidays’ curriculum. To address these challenges teacher educators can “expose prospective teachers to a variety of ideological postures” (Bartolomé, 2004, p. 116) and foreground the assumption that all education is indoctrination (McKnight & Chandler, 2009), thus necessitating the choice to act or remain silent in the face of injustice and be complicit with the oppressor. Only by attending to epochal themes of citizenship, neoliberalism, ideology and resistance in a humanizing and comprehensive way will a teacher education program begin to unravel the social structures that constrain purposeful and rationale-based teaching.

### **CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AND CRITICAL ECONOMICS**

If the ideology of schools and the dominant narrative in social studies is to be challenged, and teacher purpose is to be sustained as it addresses all forms of inequality, then critical pedagogy must be at the forefront of teacher education. Likewise, if the dominant neoclassical narrative is to be challenged in economics education, then a critical framework of economics must be established that aligns with the tenets of critical pedagogy and can guide economic educators seeking to address injustice. This section briefly describes several important components of critical pedagogy, considers the way

these components can be addressed in economics, and concludes with a discussion of gaps in the critical economics education literature.

### **Critical Economics**

Critical pedagogy involves an understanding of unjust structures (Giroux, 2011; Giroux & McLaren, 1989; McLaren, 2015), classroom practices that equalize power (Apple, Au, & Gandin, 2009; Freire, 1993; hooks, 1994), and the end goal of the transformation of society via praxis (De Lissovoy, 2008; Freire, 2005a; Kincheloe, 2008). Critical economics pedagogy should accomplish those same goals within the framework of the discipline of economics. While the majority of the discipline of economics conforms to neoclassical ways of knowing and naming the world, there are authors that seek to upend this dominant narrative by analyzing injustice and providing alternative methods for the classroom.

### ***An economic counter-narrative***

The dominant narrative of economics is neoclassical, with an understanding of ‘man’ as a pleasure-maximizing machine whose actions can be understood scientifically through markets. It denies history, both in the discipline itself and in economic modelling, and is blind to racial and gender differences while it uses the tools of power to promote unfettered capitalism. Therefore a counter-narrative must emerge that will serve as a framework for critical economics. In direct terms, the counter-narrative opposes the normative assumptions of the dominant narrative in favor of a heterodox or pluralist approach to economic theory, an awareness of the embedded value system in any school

of thought, and an exploration of power and the way inter-group differences are treated in the global economic order.

R. Miller (1993) identified the threat of continuing to teach the dominant view of economics as an existential one for humanity, however, rather than discontinue teaching economics, it is perhaps better to consider the type of economics that would address his fundamental concerns with the discipline. Rather than promote a different orthodoxy, a heterodox approach accomplishes a number of important goals. Heterodox economics encompasses a number of contemporary theories that offer a variety of ways to approach fundamental economic issues that are unexamined, ignored or considered irrelevant by neoclassical economic theory (Lee, 2012). Offering up a heterodox alternative is not simply about “opening up discussions in classrooms to a wide array of diverse and conflicting perspectives (although the more perspectives the better)” (McLaren, 2015, p. 10). Pluralism for pluralism’s sake does not necessarily attend to fundamental tenets of critical pedagogy. However, it is vital in a discipline that is so exclusionary that critical economics teachers begin to open up space to “genuinely hear the opposing positions and consider them in light of their coherence, their contradictions or lack thereof, and their ability to hold up to a hermeneutics of suspicion” (McLaren, 2015, p. 11). Only then can there be space in the curriculum for democratic alternatives to the neoliberal order.

Heterodox economics offers approaches as varied as Marxism, new Keynesianism, institutionalism, feminism, Austrianism, and many more (Denis, 2009). While the number of approaches and their specifics are important (c.f. Proctor et al., 2017), from the standpoint of a critical economics education, the important components

of these approaches are the alternatives that they provide with respect to epistemological and ontological foundations of economic thought. Jeziorski, Legardez, & Valente (2013) explain the biggest difference between neoclassical and heterodox economics as being in the treatment of certainty. Neoclassical economists attempt to impose certainty in their models and understanding of the world, in keeping with the desire to be a ‘science’ and imbibe the socially constructed power that modernity offers scientific inquiry (Aronowitz, 1988).

Heterodox economists whose ideas are on the right, left, and center include uncertainty in their models and at different levels of economic thought. An economist beloved by the right such as Friedrich Hayek believed “the knowledge of economic actors is beset with error, uncertainty, social prejudice, and subjective perception” (Burczak, 2006, p. 2). One of centrist economist John Maynard Keynes’ contributions to economics was “to emphasise [uncertainty] and to pose it against the viewpoint of economic orthodoxy which essentially presupposes certainty of foresight” (T. Lawson, 1985, p. 909). On the left, Karl Marx’s emphasized how “money fetishism” lead to “misplaced concreteness” (Daly & Cobb, 1994, p. 410) in economics. While each of these economic theorists had vastly different approaches to economic understanding, and their work has been utilized to promote vastly different economic and political goals, they were united in their critical belief that economics as a discipline was inherently uncertain.

This uncertainty alters our understanding of the world of economics. Rather than considering people as individual actors operating in isolation, it might be important to consider individuals as historically contextualized and “rooted in the sphere of spirituality

and creativity and that the outcome of it, the material world of factories and products, is subordinate” (Bendixen, 2010, p. 41). If this creative spirit, long the domain of sociologists, is indeed superior to the rational domain that has been the concern of economists for too long, then it is vital that economics turn its disciplinary attention to “the ruling cultural patterns of the respective society or finally of the world civilization” (p. 41) of which the individual actor is a part. Embedded in this consideration of an individual as historically and culturally contextualized is a critique of rationalist ways of knowing both the individual and the market. Heterodox economists might point to the recent financial crisis as a clear invalidation of the assumption that neoclassical models function rationally both in predicting the future and analyzing the past.

Neoclassical models ignore the importance of value systems in many ways. To counter this, economic educators can turn to two economic paradigms that explicitly critique the way that value systems have served the dominant social order: Marxist economics and feminist economics. Marxist economics or Marxist political economy (MPE) has a long tradition as a tool for critical social analysis (Flank, 2007; Potts, 2005). Particularly relevant to an economic counter-narrative is the unique way that MPE “conceptualizes and explains [labor] exploitation and draws out its consequences for understanding the nature, dynamics, contradictions and limitations of capitalism” (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2017, p. 21). This conceptualization is in opposition to the neoclassical view of the “economy as a system of individuals of individuals more or less efficiently organised through the market” (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2017, p. 21) and also denies the existence of the neoclassical tenet of equilibrium and promotes a theory of change

through analysis of systemic power and oppression (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2017). Feminist economics also undermines the implicit value assumptions of neoclassical economics by exposing the limitations of market analyses as the sole representative of the economy, belying the idea that the household is the basic unit of the economy, rejecting the permanence of individual preferences, expanding the notion of work, and broadening definitions of well-being at the individual and societal level (Himmelweit, 2017). These fundamental challenges to the neoclassical paradigm serve as vital components of a counter narrative both for their theoretical utility and their broad literature base. Other means of troubling this value system might include outlining a version of economics that promotes a value system of sustainability (Nelson & Goodwin, 2009), or analyzing the history of economic thought to understand the philosophical implications of multiple economic perspectives (Magee, 2009). Important to this consideration is to use these paradigmatic alternatives to promote practical challenges to the unjust economic status quo. For example, as described above, Austrian and Keynesian economics might be critical of the norm of neoclassical certainty, however their practical implementation might simply reinforce existing economic inequality. Therefore it is up to economics educators to decide which components of the neoclassical paradigm are most damaging and seek out alternative perspectives to critique and enact new economic practices.

Critical economics also involves exploring the discipline of economics with the same skepticism about underlying assumptions that are applied to any other social science (John King, 2012). This means confronting the neoclassical assumption that economics is purely science and value-neutral, and instead exploring the political

implications of economics (“To be relevant, economists need to take politics into account,” 2017), as one would the political implications of history or sociology. Economic educators should also consider the role of economics as part of an interdisciplinary liberal arts education (Colander & McGoldrick, 2009), and the best ways to infuse ethics and moral reasoning in economics curriculum and policy (Daly & Cobb, 1994; Wight, 2009; Wight & Morton, 2007). Given the prevailing neoclassical hegemony in content standards and textbooks, economic educators should be proficient in ‘mining’ existing content standards for opportunities to explore these value systems (Vickery, Holmes, & Brown, 2015) and utilizing theoretical frameworks such as Critical Race Theory (CRT) to explore new ways of using economics to make learning more relevant (L. King & Finley, 2015) and to give their students the opportunity to transform their reality.

A critical economic framework must follow a humanizing approach to education (Freire, 1993) that recognizes student voice, identifies prevalent economic themes, and brings people to transform society in a just way. It is vital that students get the opportunity to talk about their lives in economics class where, if given the opportunity, “[t]hey tell stories filled, not surprisingly, with concrete illustrations of the economic world that is portrayed in the literature of political economics” (Leclerc, Ford, & Ford, 2009, p. 201). This will increase relevance and allow students to “learn about the economic issues most pertinent to them” (Kim, 2012, p. 196), thus speaking to epochal themes, or the issues that dominate an era’s sociopolitical context (Freire, 2005a). Our current era is beset by racism, sexism, poverty, and inequality, and it would be incumbent



on economics educators to be prepared to address these themes as co-learners with students who are experiencing the effects of these phenomenon.

Finally, it is vital that a critical economics framework emphasize the communal over the individual. This may occur in terms of firm analysis as discussed earlier, or it may involve thinking differently about public vs. private spheres (Cumbers & McMaster, 2012), but the notion of individualization is incredibly challenging to dispel given the way it pervades cultural, social, political, and educational discourses (Nichols, 2017). Yet it is because of this perniciousness that cooperation, communitarianism, and collaboration must be foregrounded in economics classes if we are to achieve a different economic outcome.

### ***Critical economic pedagogy***

Effective examples of critical economic pedagogy are limited in the literature, and some methods described below fall short of critical pedagogy in significant ways. Still, as potential steps beyond the dominant narrative in economics, they deserve attention, and may serve to open the door to further exploration of critical approaches.

Moorhouse (2009) reconsiders the assumptions that underlie firm behavior in classroom activities that are intended to show how the “explicit assumption of profit maximization hides many implicit assumptions that directly result from this assumed singular focus of the firm” (p. 114) including those that suppress individualism and deny human agency. G. Miller (2012), explicitly pursues feminist economics through student diaries as a way to “elevate women’s economic status and/or to reduce the androcentric

bias within mainstream economics” (p. 215), thus addressing the fundamental patriarchy in neoclassical economics. Kim (2012), utilizes a Freirean approach to teaching adult learners by using visual and participatory methods which avoids the inherent dehumanization of the banking model (Freire, 1993) that is rampant in economic classrooms (Becker & Watts, 2001), and Susman (2009) shows how students can have their world view challenged while integrating their learning and community service in a course that emphasizes humanization in a “full time living/working/learning environment” (p. 261). Finally, economics methods based in critical theory can be used to address racism, gender inequality, and gentrification and can “help to tie the structural critique that undergirds much of critical theory to the individualist ways of knowing the world that many students are socialized to hold” (Shanks, 2017, p. 15). These pedagogical options begin to address the failures of the dominant narrative, both theoretically and practically.

Other examples of economic pedagogy involve either a structural critique or a methodological improvement, but not necessarily both. McGoldrick and Zeigart (2002) use service-learning to teach about economics while addressing poverty, but do so in a way that works within the existing system rather than challenging its authority, as does Richards Elliot (2009) in her effort to enhance understanding of development economics in an efficient way. Rogers and Westheimer (2016) have issued a call to address inequality beyond the “facts about social and economic stratification” and into “questions about the causes and consequences of inequality or to competing discourses on its importance or ways to diminish it” (p. 74), but their survey data say more about why

teachers do not discuss inequality than ways to address it in the classroom. Other approaches include using public scholarship to “illuminate the social dimensions of economic problems” (Mcgoldrick & Peterson, 2009, p. 243), or utilizing problem-based learning to enhance economic understanding (Wilson & Dixon, 2009). These examples are important, as teachers and teacher educators can fashion a critical economics pedagogy out of their constituent parts, but leave important elements of a comprehensive critical pedagogy out of their explicit theory and practice.

### **Critical Economics and Praxis**

Critical economics as praxis requires all of the above considerations. It must address the dominant narrative in economics. It must allow for classroom activities that are humanizing, and it must take learning beyond the intellectual level, to allow for the reflexivity of praxis to engage the world and remake it in a more democratic way. Drawing from Haberman’s (1991) piece on the ‘Pedagogy of Poverty’, I end with the following recommendations for a ‘Pedagogy of Critical Economics’:

- When students are analyzing multiple economic perspectives to determine the most authentic and just paradigm, critical economics is being taught
- When value systems that underlie economic perspectives are discussed openly, critical economics is being taught
- When economics is treated like any other social science, with all the skepticism and evidentiary analysis that involves, critical economics is being taught

- When students are able to talk about the way they experience economics in their lives, critical economics is being taught
- When major themes that affect global society are central to economic inquiry, critical economics is being taught
- When individualism is deliberately identified as problematic and communitarianism is practiced, critical economics is being taught
- When teachers and students collaborate to name their world in an effort to change it, critical economics is being taught

Having outlined the above understandings of economics, economic education, school ideology and dominant narratives in social studies, teacher purpose, and critical pedagogy, the limitations within economics education literature are fairly clear.

Economics, in general, is an understudied discipline within social studies (S. Miller & VanFossen, 2008). It is further understudied in teacher education literature (Ayers, 2015; Joshi & Marri, 2006). While more economics literature is critiquing to the neoclassical dominant narrative, it is still the unquestioned overriding paradigm within the discipline (Lee, 2012). There are very few studies of teachers' purpose for teaching economics (Vanfossen, 2000) and none that address preservice teachers' purpose for teaching economics. While there are several studies that address critical pedagogy and economics, most do not include a full exploration of social analysis, classroom activities, and praxis. Therefore, this study seeks to understand how preservice teachers conceptualize the role of economics within their teaching practice, the way their teaching purpose impacts their

understanding of the role of economics, and the way they conceptualize critical economics within a teaching program that emphasizes critical pedagogy.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **RESEARCH PARADIGM**

In choosing to pursue a research question, one is doing more than simply seeking an answer. The type of question that is asked and the means by which an answer is sought speak to something deeper in the researcher. In fact, it may be said that the pursuit of an answer to a research question says more about the researcher than the answer to the question. The framing of the question implicates the researcher's positionality, their history, and their view of the purpose of research. The choices that the researcher makes in seeking an answer implicates the researcher's views on reality and the nature of knowledge. Therefore, in an attempt to understand a simple research question, it is imperative that one interrogate the underlying epistemology and ontology, recognize why a particular theoretical perspective is appropriate to those understandings, select a methodology that is in line with that perspective and employ the most rigorous methods possible within that methodological choice. These choices will also speak to the way the researcher sees their self in relation to the world at large.

My research questions were threefold:

1. How does content knowledge and previous experience with economics influence the way preservice teachers understand the function of economics within social studies education?
2. How do preservice teachers describe their purpose for teaching, and how does that impact their understanding of the function of economics?

3. How do these teachers implement their understanding of the function of economics within their social studies instructional decisions?

In the section that follows, I describe how these questions and my positionality are rooted in a specific epistemology and ontology, and how I sought to answer them from a specific theoretical perspective and methodology, and the methods that I used to seek answers.

Crotty (1998) delineates this process of interlocking fundamentals of research into four elements designed to answer two simple questions: what methodologies and methods will be employed, and how is that choice justified? These simple questions, however, require that researchers consider “the assumptions about reality that we bring to our work [and] the understanding you and I have of what human knowledge is, what it entails, and what status can be ascribed to it” (Chapter 1, Section 1, para. 3-4). This starting point of epistemology and ontology will inform the three elements that follow (theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods). Epistemology is “the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology” (Chapter 1, Section 1, para. 6) and provides a theoretical base to understand the type of knowledge that is both possible and legitimate. My epistemological stance is rooted in a constructionist view of knowledge, which denies the possibility of objective truth and instead finds meaning in “in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world” (Chapter 1, Section 5, para. 4). Therefore, every individual will construct knowledge differently due to the fact that they engage the world in a unique way. Ontology, or the study of being, sits alongside epistemology, and “[o]ntological issues and epistemological issues tend to emerge together” (Chapter 1, Section 6, para. 3). In my case, I see reality as

multiple and dependent on the individual, structured by their unique knowing of the world via their interaction with it. This perspective is embedded in my choice of research questions and desire to understand how others derive meaning in a particular subject and the experiences and understandings that color their conceptualization of the role of economics.

These epistemological and ontological perspectives illuminated the theoretical perspective that was necessary to address my research questions. While an objectivist epistemology might allow for quantitative methods to arrive at a singular truth, a constructionist epistemology that seeks to understand multiple, distinctive ways of knowing the world requires qualitative analysis and specifically an interpretivist lens within that analytical tradition. Qualitative approaches are suitable for seeking to achieve a deep understanding of a phenomenon (Trochim & Donnelly, 2006) or to “get at the rich complexity of . . . issues that almost defy simple quantitative summarization” (p. 143). Within the qualitative approach, there are a variety of traditions that may or may not fit the research question. For my particular questions about the way preservice teachers understand the role of economics, I sought to understand the perspectives of others, and thus make use of an interpretivist approach to research. Glesne’s (2011) delineation of the possibilities of interpretivist inquiry includes the following contributions that aligned with my objectives:

From what you see and hear, you interpret others’ perspectives of some aspect of the world, contributing to the multiplicity of voices and visions and the plurality of our knowing; . . . interpretations can point out some significance or meaning in the world that through your representations, can inspire others to perceive, believe, or act in different ways; . . . [t]he act of listening can be, in itself, a



radical action when you use your inquiry to witness the stories and lives of those whose voices are ignored (p. 24). These are necessary components of my inquiry into preservice teacher understanding and inform the choice of methodology and methods I utilized as well.

## **CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY**

The specific intention to study the way that preservice teachers understand the role of economics made a case study methodology appropriate. The fact that these preservice teachers were part of an urban teaching program makes them part of “a specific, unique, bounded system” (Stake, as cited in Mertens, 2015, p. 245) and the more the unit of inquiry fits that definition, “the greater the rationale for calling it a case study” (Mertens, 2015, p. 245). In order to properly conduct a case study, one must commit to understanding the nature of the case, its background, its setting, other contexts it is embedded in, and the informants who are part of the case. This allows for specific lenses to inform the case study in the way the researcher describes the relationship of the case to society at large. For example, critical or transformative lenses may be necessary to describe the way in which power operates in the case’s understanding of a particular phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). In this study, the critical lens applied to the case followed a Freirean notion of critical consciousness, where humans “apprehend the objective data of their reality (as well as the ties that link one datum to another) through reflection . . . Transcending a single dimension, they reach back to yesterday, recognize today, and come upon tomorrow” (Freire, 2005a, p. 3). Applied to case study research, this lens sought to understand how the bounded system of preservice teachers understood their

economic reality, and how they linked that reality in their pedagogy and purpose. There are limitations to case study research, in the form of generalizability and ethics, as well as reliability and validity. Given these concerns, it may be necessary to outline my positionality and my understandings of rigor and trustworthiness as they relate to research in this methodology.

Case study research must address “issues of reliability, validity, and generalizability” (Merriam, 2009, p. 52). However, Trochim & Donnelly (2006) suggest that these issues need to be reframed in qualitative research. Rather than positivist or postpositivist emphases on internal/external validity, reliability, and objectivity; they suggest analyzing the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of research. To enhance credibility, or the “compatibility of the constructed realities that exist in the minds of the inquiry’s respondents with those that are attributed to them” (Erlandson, 1993, p. 30). This requires prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, adequate materials, peer debriefing and member checks; issues that will be addressed in the following section on methods. Transferability is the “extent to which [research] findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents” (p. 31) and while it is not always a fundamental goal of case study research, and perfect applicability outside of a specific context is likely impossible, researchers should attempt to utilize thick description and purposive sampling to help “describe in great detail the interrelationships and intricacies of the context being studied” (p. 32). This allows the reader to transfer the findings in the way and form that speaks to their experience. Dependability refers to the way that data is stable and, while descriptions may be

variable, variability is due to particular sources and their different ways of representing a phenomenon. Ensuring dependability involves allowing for external checks on the processes that were followed to conduct the inquiry. A similar audit can be performed to address confirmability or “the degree to which . . . findings are the product of the focus of its inquiry and not the biases of the researcher” (p. 34). These important steps are necessary not to confirm a single universal truth, but to ascertain to the best of the researcher’s ability the multiple and varied truths espoused by the respondents.

Researchers should also not confine themselves to simply reframing issues that positivism has emphasized, however, as those too can be problematically asserted as “the ‘right’ or privileged form of authoritative knowledge” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2000, p. 961). Instead, alternatives to positivist approaches should carry alternative conceptions based on the differing epistemological and ontological foundations they entail. This means triangulation must be thought of differently. Mathison (1988) suggests that triangulation should not lead to “the assumption that triangulation will result in a single valid proposition” (p. 15) but rather, it should allow the researcher to understand convergences, inconsistency, and contradictions in the data. Richardson and St. Pierre (2000) go further, and deny the limited worldview inherent in triangulation, preferring the metaphor of crystallization as a way to approach the world. In this sense, data should lead to meanings that, like crystals, “grow, change, and are altered, but they are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves” (p. 963). Finally, a move beyond positivist impulses in research requires an alternative conception of quality. Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011) suggest that research quality in

critical traditions lie in the “erosion of unearned privileges and its ability to impart action for the creation of a more fair society” (p. 108). Therefore this critical case study attempted to be credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable; while still understanding that meanings sometimes diverge and contradict, grow and change, and can fight injustice and inspire change.

### **Selection of Participants**

This study made use of purposeful sampling in order to learn from “*information-rich* cases for study in depth” (Patton, 2002, p. 230). This is in contrast to a probability sample which tries to generalize or call in an average sample so as to better understand a homogenous whole. In purposeful sampling, “[participants] are called in precisely because of their special experience and competence” (Patton, 2002, p. 440). The questions addressed in this study inquire into the purpose of teachers who are participating in an urban teaching preparation program. Specifically, the questions deal with the purpose of economics, the purpose of social studies, and the purpose of teaching.

The participants in this study were selected from a cohort of undergraduate students who entered an urban teaching program at a large, public university in an urban context. The program and context will be discussed further later in the chapter, but the program’s emphasis on valuing the diverse linguistic and cultural resources students bring into the classroom means that participants had considered their purpose for teaching in some way prior to entering this specific program. The specific ways that they described their purpose and reason for selecting the Urban Teaching program will be

explored as part of the study, but their general desire to pursue certification through an Urban Teaching program indicated that there was a critical consciousness at work in the preservice teachers who choose this program, and thus they were a purposeful sample that fit the research questions of this study.

Additionally, I have included all six members of the cohort in this case study so as to have the widest range of possible backgrounds, purposes, and familiarity with economics. While the members of this case had limited experience with economics, this conforms to findings that social studies teachers rarely have a great deal of content background in economics (Bosshardt & Watts, 2005). Thus their limited content knowledge, to be discussed in detail in the participants section, makes them representative of social studies teachers at large. By utilizing data from all six members of the cohort, I was able to draw on themes that arose regardless of specific backgrounds and levels of familiarity with content. For example, had I selected the three Latinx participants, I could not determine whether their desire to include economics as part of an interrogation of migrant labor was the result of their purpose for teaching social studies, or their family background, or both. The exploration of economics of migrant labor by several of the participants who were not Latinx, however, demonstrated the case's purpose for teaching social studies in a way that was relevant to students and addressed current issues. My initial intent was to purposefully select preservice teachers that are committed to teaching a critical version of social studies, however, these preservice teachers all had this goal to varying extents, therefore they truly represented a case that was as similar as possible. They had limited economic content knowledge, they had some

level of critical attitude, whether that be grasping epochal themes, or a commitment to superseding the oppressive nature of these themes (Freire, 2005a), they were exploring the way these themes fit into social studies pedagogy together, and they were learning and growing as teachers together, making this cohort as a whole necessary participants in the study.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

This study utilized a conceptual framework grounded in two important theoretical frames. In the previous chapter, I summarized the literature regarding the economic dominant narrative, economics education, dominant narratives in schools and social studies, teacher education and purpose, and critical pedagogy and economics. In this section, I synthesize this literature into a conceptual framework for this study. A conceptual framework is a vital component of research as it is both “the lens through which you view the world” and it also helps determine “what questions you ask” (Merriam, 2009, p. 67). It is used “to focus the inquiry and give it boundaries rather than to serve as the guide for data collection and analysis” (Mertens, 2015, p. 116). In this study, the synthesis of literature that forms my lens, informs my questions, and focuses my inquiry utilizes humanizing pedagogy and teacher purpose. Humanizing pedagogy emphasizes dialogue between students, teachers and the world; student experience as foundational to constructing knowledge; a critique of official knowledge; and the framing of critical questions and introducing subjugated knowledge. Teacher purpose is an essential component of this framework as considers teachers’ practical theories about teaching; reflection as part of teacher growth; and a consideration of transmission or transformation of the existing social order via the disciplinary tools of social studies.

While economics education itself is not a framework, these frames are linked by the content and ideas prevalent in economics curriculum.

### **Critical Pedagogy**

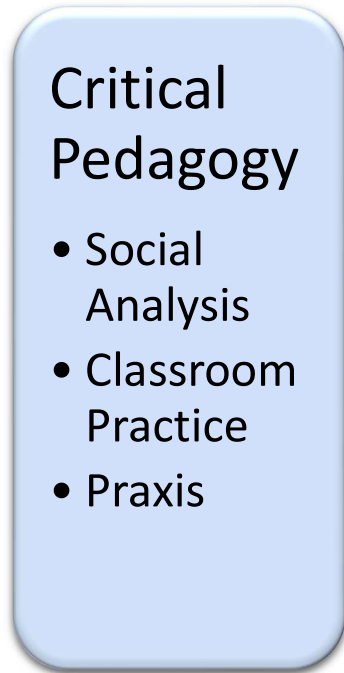


Figure 1: Critical Pedagogy

The first frame (see Figure 1) emerges from a literature base in critical pedagogy. In the broadest possible sense, critical pedagogy “seeks to expose how relations of power and inequality, (social, cultural, economic), in their myriad forms combinations and complexities, are manifest and are challenged in the formal and informal education of children and adults” (Apple, Au, & Gandin, 2009, p. 3). Inherent in this definition is the idea that education cannot be a neutral enterprise (Freire, 1993; Kincheloe, 2008; Zinn, 2010), and thus one is either challenging the prevailing ideology, or promoting it. For the

purpose of this project, this broad understanding of critical pedagogy will be described via its implications for social analysis, classroom practice, and praxis.

The critical function of critical pedagogy refers to the fundamental need to critique “texts, institutions, social relations, and ideologies as part of the script of official power” (Giroux, 2011, p. 4). This critique must start at the fundamental level where learners “are encouraged to question dominant epistemological, axiological, and political assumptions that are often taken for granted and often prop up the dominant social class” (McLaren, 2015, p. 8). Applying a critical lens to the world at this level requires one to read the world and the word dialectically (Freire, 1993), seeing the “world through the eyes of the dispossessed” (Apple et al., 2009, p. 3). This involves critical analyses of race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), gender (Weiler, 1988), and capitalism (Bowles & Gintis, 2011) and the way these and other axes of oppression interrelate (Brayboy, 2006; De Lissovoy, 2015; Ferguson, 2002; Renold, 2000; Vickery, 2015). However, simply looking at the world and pointing out injustice is not enough. Critical pedagogy requires that teaching and learning transcend methods that concomitantly maintain hegemony in the classroom and in society.

Freire (1993) utilizes the term ‘banking model’ to describe traditional classroom practice and its relationship with epistemology, power, and society. By enshrining the teacher as authority figure, dispensing a view of reality that is banal or unrelated to students; and students as empty receptacles, rewarded for internalizing this “motionless, static, compartmentalized” (p. 71) reality; several important assumptions become ingrained in students. One, knowledge exists beyond students, and ‘learning’ is the



absorption of this knowledge. Two, it is an extrinsic authority that bestows knowledge on students, to be regurgitated for reward. Three, one's own life, background, or funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) are irrelevant and in fact may be antithetical to the official knowledge (Apple, 2000) of the school and society. Countering this with a critical pedagogy requires a "radical shift in one's social commitments" (Apple et al., 2009, p. 3), and a dialogical classroom practice where teachers and students become co-learners as they seek to identify epochal themes (Freire, 2005a). By subverting the power dynamic in the classroom, we can begin to subvert the "established distinction between the rulers and the ruled" which prohibits "the active equality and distributive justice necessary for a truly inclusive democratic society" (McLaren, 2015, p. 8). This also gives way to greater student voice and agency, which facilitates the empowerment and solidarity necessary to address democracy and justice through "the most fundamental features of teaching and learning" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 9).

The end goal of critical social analysis and critical classroom practice is praxis, or "reflective action that intervenes in a social context, necessarily transforming it" (De Lissovoy, 2008, p. 129). By analyzing the dominant themes of the era, and equalizing the power relationship in the classroom, teachers and students must then begin the project of finding spaces of possible action (Apple et al., 2009) while continuing to balance "social change and cultivating the intellect" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 10). Praxis "is theory in motion, the dialectic between matter and consciousness, between social being and subjectivity" (McLaren, 2015, p. 14). In this way, critical pedagogy is humanizing, for "to exist humanly is to *name* the world, to change it" (Freire, 1993, p. 88).

## Transformative Purpose

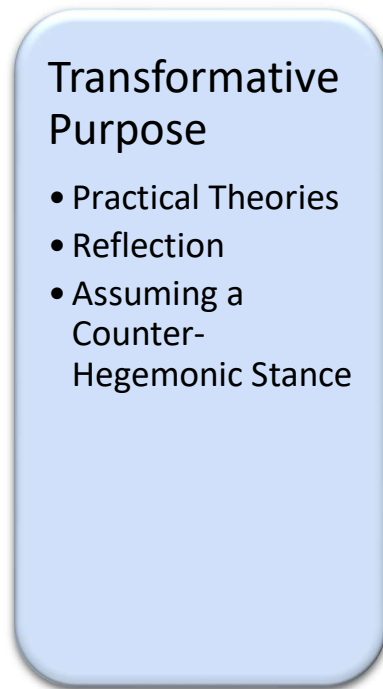


Figure 2: Transformative Purpose

As described in the previous chapter, teacher purpose is more than simply why a teacher chooses to enter the profession, and includes more than a teaching philosophy. Teacher purpose should address moral and ethical components of teaching (Dinkelman, 2009), it should delve into the way teachers see themselves, their teaching, their curriculum, and their place in society (Beck & Kosnik, 2014), and should be foregrounded throughout the teacher preparation process (Hollins, 2015). In this frame (see Figure 2), I consider the way that teachers' practical theories, reflective processes, and ideas about the social order manifest in their purpose and exist in their pedagogy. I also emphasize the way traditional notions of purpose can be grounded in an ethic of

transformation, as teachers consider their power and potential to help build a new social order (Counts, 2004).

Teachers' practical theories include the "beliefs, assumptions, values, knowledge and experiences that are relevant to their teaching practice" (Zeichner & Liston, 2013, p. 26). These theories are fundamental to understanding teacher purpose, and an interrogation of the nature of these theories and their source allows for a better understanding of their reflective process and goals for education. Handell and Lauvas (1987) assert that these theories arise from three significant places: personal experience, transmitted knowledge, and values. Personal experiences arise from life experiences within and outside of educational experiences that might impact views on teaching. While not all experience is necessarily beneficial to teacher development (Dewey, 1938/1997), teacher educators must explore these experiences as a first step to understanding purpose. Beyond personal experiences, there is transmitted knowledge that derives from when "[w]e watch others act, we listen to and talk to others, we read books, watch films, live in particular cultures and subcultures and so forth" (Zeichner & Liston, 2013, p. 30). This transmitted knowledge influences perception of experiences and also contributes to understandings of values. Values can take many forms. They may be "of a more general ethical or philosophical nature . . . , they may be political values . . . , or they may be more directly related to education" (Handel & Lauvas, 1987, p. 12), but they are interwoven with experiences and transmitted knowledge to inform the foundation for teacher purpose. In terms of transformative purpose, this component of the frame allows for an understanding of the way that personal experience, transmitted knowledge, and

values can contribute to “[e]xposing the covert conservative political underpinnings shaping the content of material in the classroom, as well as the way in which ideologies of domination informed the ways thinkers teach and act in the classroom” (hooks, 2013, p. 1).

While practical theories are essential to interrogate as part of an understanding of teacher purpose, the way in which teachers reflect on their teaching will affect their purpose as well. Vital to the conceptual analysis of this activity is the distinction between *reflection-on-action*, and *reflection-in-action*, and a consideration of the socially and contextually mediated nature of reflection.

Donald Schön (1983) differentiates these two reflective stances based on their respective timeframes. *Reflection-on-action* occurs both before and after an action. Generally, in teaching, this “occurs before a lesson when we plan for and think about our lesson and after instruction when we consider what occurred” (Zeichner & Liston, 2013, p. 15). *Reflection-in-action* occurs in the teaching moment, in response to a stimuli that is unexpected or unplanned for. The marriage of these two temporal frames of reflection are significant components of teacher purpose as they will be built upon the teachers’ practical theories and begin to surmount the traditional theory-practice divide by demonstrating the omnipresent nature of reflection grounded in purpose.

The criticisms of Schön’s work are important factors in a comprehensive understanding of reflection’s place in teacher purpose. Notably, Day (1993) considers the way that dialogue and discursive practices shape reflection. In this study, the researcher, classmates, Instructional Coaches, and instructors all form a community of critical

practitioners who seek to understand schooling practices and challenge those that deny an equitable education. In this way, reflection becomes a communal practice, and is grounded in the “social conditions that frame and influence” (Zeichner & Liston, 2013, p. 20) teaching practices. Reflection then becomes a way for teachers to collaboratively interrogate their practices, both on-action and in-action with attention paid to the unique sociopolitical context in which their teaching takes place. Transformative reflection involves Freirean ‘learning’ which requires teachers to be “humble and open . . . continually ready to rethink what has been thought and to revise their position. Their learning lies in their seeking to become involved in their students’ curiosity and in the paths and streams it takes them through” (Freire, 2005b, pp. 31–32). This transformative reflection is grounded in dialogue and social conditions, but also transforms the relationship and power dynamics between the teacher and learner.

The final component of teacher purpose that is essential to understand is embedded in practical theories as well as the reflective process, yet stands alone as a fundamental question. Is the purpose of teaching to ensure the best possible outcomes in the current social order, or is it to revolutionize the existing order, in favor of a more democratic or emancipatory society? This question has a long history in American educational thought (Groenke, 2009), and is vital to a thorough understanding of teacher purpose. Schooling has traditionally “functioned, in general, to transmit the dominant social order, preserving the status quo” (Stanley, 2005, p. 282). Teachers, drawing on their practical theories and reflecting on themselves and in a broader community, must decide if they are to continue the transmission of this social order or if they are to

transform it. There can be no more significant component to teaching purpose than the choice of whether one will remain ‘neutral on a moving train’ (Zinn, 2010). The emphasis in this study was the extent to which and the means by which preservice teachers explicitly advocated for and taught for transformation, or the way “they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process” (Freire, 1993, p. 83), that as teachers they must change. This *counter-hegemonic stance* is built through a teacher education program that emphasizes political clarity or “the ongoing process by which individuals achieve ever-deepening consciousness of the sociopolitical and economic realities that shape their lives and their capacity to transform such material and symbolic conditions” (Bartolomé, 2004, p. 98) as well as ideological clarity or “the process by which individuals struggle to identify and compare their own explanations for the existing socioeconomic and political hierarchy with the dominant society’s” (Bartolomé, 2004, p. 98).

### Critical Pedagogy, Teacher Purpose, and Economics

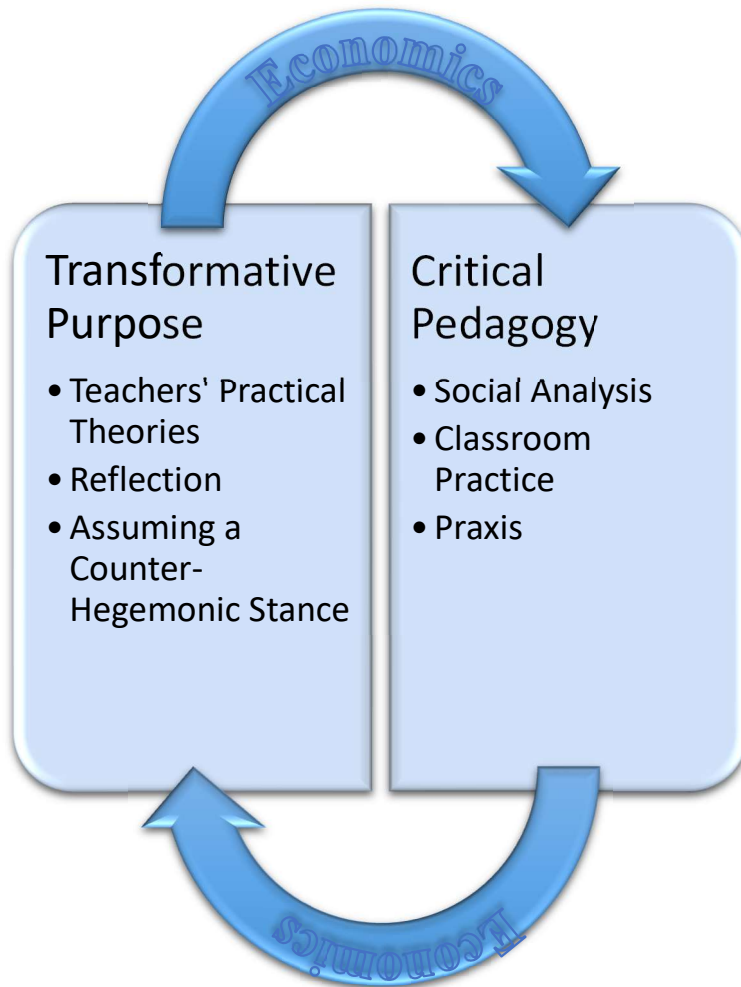


Figure 3: Intersection of Conceptual Frameworks

The final element in this conceptual framework is the way that Economics as a discipline ties purpose and pedagogy (see Figure 3). Essentially this conceptual framework will be utilized to understand the way that teacher's practical theories about economics, reflection on economics, and views of the potential of economics to transform society affect their implementation of critical pedagogy. Likewise, the social analysis

they take part in via economics, their classroom practices as they teach economics and the praxis they achieve through economics will inform their developing purpose as teachers.

## **CONTEXT**

### **Urban Teacher Program**

The Urban Teacher program was designed to prepare both undergraduate and master's teacher certification candidates in both English and social studies to appreciate the linguistic and cultural diversity of students in urban areas (Yosso, 2005), drawing on their funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) as the basis of instruction, and emphasizing critical multicultural citizenship (Castro, 2013). The social studies coursework in particular emphasized the notion that there are dominant narratives (Wertsch, 2000) at work in the curriculum that maintain white, male, middle class norms, and promotes critical historical inquiry as a way to challenge those narratives (Salinas & Blevins, 2014). Importantly, the program drew on a body of literature, described in the previous chapter that challenges these narratives largely in history (e.g. Loewen, 2008; Swartz, 1992) or geography (e.g. Schmidt, 2015; Schmidt & Kenreich, 2015), but has a limited base of literature to draw on that questions the dominant narratives of economics within the social studies (e.g. the conception of 'man', scientific markets, absence of history, neoliberalism, etc.).

The participants in this study came from the undergraduate cohort within this program which does not constitute a major, rather students in the program complete the



program's three semester course of study and required field experiences on top of a traditional academic major within any number of other schools or departments across the university. The program also has several unique characteristics which are relevant to this exploration.

The undergraduate program takes place over the course of a calendar year, beginning in the summer prior to an undergraduate's final year of collegiate coursework. The summer coursework includes two three hour classes; literacy across the disciplines, and sociocultural foundations of education. In addition to this coursework, preservice teachers enter into a field experience with Discovery, an Americorps program described in the next sub-section. The summer courses are designed to support the nascent understandings of students about critical literacy and the place of schools in society while also supporting them as they teach on a daily basis. The fall semester includes a social studies methods course and a 45 hour field placement in a local urban public school, followed by the spring semester which includes a three hour teaching practicum that coincides with a full-time student teaching experience in a different local urban public school. In addition to their coursework and field experiences, preservice teachers are prepared for state certification exams through course content and extracurricular review sessions. The completion of this coursework, fieldwork, and the passing of the content and professional standardized exams are requirements for traditional teacher certification within the state of Texas.

**Discovery**

Discovery is a local version of an Americorps program that provides comprehensive support to low-income students who would be the first in their families to go to college. These supports include out-of school learning and academic case management, and they are provided from the middle-school grades through college. While the range of services they provide to these future collegians is extensive, including case management, Saturday and after-school programming, high school transition, high school institutes, college exploration and preparation, and college completion programs, the specific component of their organization that preservice teachers worked with is their middle-school summer program. Designed to offer an academically rigorous curriculum that mitigates summer learning loss, the courses and curriculum build academic and social skills in an intimate setting, utilizing college students from around the country to provide a low teacher-student ratio.

Students in Discovery received daily instruction in social studies, English, math, and science. They also participated in team-building activities and take elective courses taught by the Discovery staff. Additionally, they engaged in physical activity and field trips throughout the summer. The six-week program culminated in a Presentation of Learning, where students presented an interdisciplinary product that demonstrates what they have learned throughout the summer. They also completed a standardized pre- and post-test of core content knowledge to determine if the programmatic goal of preventing summer learning loss had been achieved.

Preservice teachers in the Urban Teacher program worked alongside Americorps employees from around the country who are employed by Discovery to serve as instructors. This means that not only were the preservice teachers doing a challenging job, they were taking college coursework on top of their teaching responsibilities, which introduced a great deal of stress and required a time-intensive commitment to the theory and practice of urban teaching. Social studies teachers taught one of three grades with specific content foci; rising seventh graders were taught African-American civil rights, rising eighth graders were taught Latinx civil rights, and rising ninth graders were taught Journalism with an emphasis on social issues. While there were curriculum guides and lesson plans available for these subject areas, most preservice teachers chose to plan their own lessons individually, or with the help of their subject-area team. Doctoral students from the university were employed by Discovery as Instructional Coaches and supported their planning and instructional efforts through professional development sessions, professional learning community meetings, observations with feedback, and formal and informal evaluations as required by the university's professional development sequence.

### **Curricular Context**

As discussed in the previous chapter, much of the content in economics classes is based on neoclassical conceptions of economics as codified in the *Voluntary National Content Standards* (Siegried & Krueger, 2010). These standards are represented in the majority of economics textbooks (Leet & Lopus, 2007), and have strongly influenced the NCSS C3 Framework (Swan et al., 2013). Very few studies address broad content

understanding further than this at the national level, preferring instead to explore specific concepts that are often absent from the curriculum. For example, a national survey of state social studies standards found a lack of attention to the federal budget, debt, and deficit (Marri, Crocco, Shuttleworth, Gaudelli, & Grolnick, 2012). Other studies of textbooks have found little recognition of the social economy and a lack of depth when it was recognized (Myers & Stocks, 2010), a near absence of “any information on the distribution of wealth in society” (Neumann, 2014, p. 279), a failure to critically evaluate socialism (Neumann, 2012), inaccurate descriptions of the causes of the great depression (Cargill & Mayer, 1998), and relatedly, a lack of coverage of government failure (Leet & Lopus, 2007).

## **PARTICIPANTS**

### ***Nora***

Nora is a white female from outside of Chicago. She attended Catholic schools throughout her K-12 educational experience, including an all-girls high school. According to her, she had little exposure to racial diversity in this setting, both in terms of the student population and the teacher population. She also relayed that her curriculum was “really limited . . . because it was classical. There were some things that were very much that denial, ‘we’re not going to talk about any of this, it doesn’t exist, okay’”. She was a sociology major who always had teaching as a fall back plan, but eventually she “woke up. I keep saying this, I fall back on this, why do you think you keep coming back to this” (interview, 6/16/17) and realized that teaching was a way to incorporate her

passion for sociology with a career, eventually developing an appreciation for teaching as a career in and of itself.

### ***Tori***

Tori is a black female from a major Texas metropolitan area. Growing up her schools were “majority black and Hispanic students but teachers were mostly white” (interview, 6/16/17). She brought up an eighth-grade teacher as a reason for getting in to teaching, explaining that not only did he prepare students for standardized exams, but he was relaxed and helped students learn without feeling like it was effort. She wanted to be a teacher like this, to enable students to achieve their goals. Particularly, her undergraduate education up to that point as a Youth and Community Studies major had pointed out the structural inadequacies of urban schools, which fostered a desire to help students in urban environments achieve their goals.

### ***Ernesto***

Ernesto identifies as a Mexican male, who was born in Mexico, but grew up in an urban area in Texas. He moved throughout the urban area, from “predominately a Mexican neighborhood”, to an area with “a lot of racial tension between African-Americans and Hispanics”, then back to an area with “more Latinos and Hispanic people”. He also moved throughout the school system a lot, including moving between several local districts and spending time in several different schools that offered magnet and other desirable programs, as well as a short stint at a private school. Additionally, his personal circumstances and living arrangements varied throughout his adolescence, but

“realized that the common thing that . . . kept me out of trouble” (interview, 6/16/17) was school and a handful of good teachers who pointed out his potential. He sought to become a teacher like them for students like him, and to avoid the negative perceptions that many have about urban schools and urban areas in general.

### ***Lizeth***

Lizeth is a Latina female who went to Head Start on the west coast, but lived the rest of her educational career in public schools in the Rio Grande Valley, including an Early College high school where she earned an associate’s degree in biology while finishing high school. Shortly before matriculating to the state university, she decided that a career in science was “not going to make me happy in life” (interview, 6/22/17) and switched to a government major. This focus was generally the result of positive experiences with social studies teachers throughout middle and high school, both in terms of content, and their willingness to guide her through the college application process.

### ***Jonny***

Jonny is a white female from a major Texas metropolitan area. She attended public schools throughout her school experience. She was a Youth and Community Studies major; whose parents were both in education including her father who was a social studies teacher. An early interest in the History channel grew into a specific interest in Masonic history which broadened into a broader appreciation for history as a discipline. Her experience in high school as a tutor for standardized exams as a co-teacher showed her that she “really enjoyed just being in the classroom” and her

coursework in her degree pointed out the need for good teachers in “underfunded, under-resourced, diverse areas” (interview, 6/14/17).

### ***Cristina***

Cristina is a Latina who grew up near a major Texas metropolitan area, in an area she described as “the outskirts . . . still the city but not downtown . . . I guess it’s a suburb”, and was a first-generation immigrant and the child of immigrant parents. She described her schools growing up as “low income. Most of the students were African American and Hispanic and most of my teachers were also African American and Hispanic” (interview, 6/10/17), and related the fact that she could only remember one white teacher and a handful of white students in each class. She was a social work major, but had a lifelong desire to be a teacher and so was pursuing her teacher certification in addition to her social work degree. Eventually, she wanted to do research on teaching and learning in urban areas that might culminate in opening up her own school that utilized the teaching styles and methods she developed while researching. Cristina was also extremely active on campus with a variety of student groups.

### ***Content Knowledge and Previous Experience with Economics***

Preservice teachers had very little experience with economics, reflecting the findings of a number of studies that explore the economics backgrounds of social studies teachers (Anthony, Smith, & Miller, 2015; Aske, 2000, 2003; Ayers, 2016; Joshi & Marri, 2006; Lynch, 1990, 1994; Walstad, 2001). Four of the participants had taken a single semester course in economics in high school, and two had not taken an economics

course at all. Of those that did take a semester in high school; Tori and Ernesto took Advanced Placement macroeconomics, while Cristina and Jonny took an ‘on-level’ course that complied with state social studies standards. Tori and Lizeth did not take any economics classes either in high school or college. Tori’s private school did not require the class as part of their curriculum, and Lizeth’s early college high school focused on classes needed to earn an Associate’s degree upon graduation which limited the amount of social studies classes taken in her degree plan.

Given this lack of exposure to economics via formal curriculum, it is no surprise that preservice teachers ranked their content knowledge in economics toward the bottom when compared to other disciplines within social studies. For Tori, economics would rank “at the bottom” (interview, 6/16/17) of disciplines such as history, geography, and political science. She explained that she didn’t “remember much, because I didn’t pay attention much, because I didn’t care about it as much” (interview 6/16/17). Jonny likewise expressed her lack of content knowledge as “pretty low” because it didn’t “click in my head as well as other subjects within social studies do” (interview 6/14/17). Cristina and Ernesto both ranked their content knowledge in economics at the bottom of the disciplines within social studies. Lizeth, expressed her displeasure with economics (despite not having taken a class in economics) by saying it was her least favorite, and it was the subject she had the least knowledge in. Nora was the only preservice teacher to qualify her ranking, described her content knowledge as:

Pretty far down there. My understanding of economics is very much from a theoretical perspective, talking about Marx or functionalism and that kind of stuff,



that's where I get my understanding of economics. It would definitely be below history and government. (interview, 6/16/17)

This understanding of economic theory outside of the traditional, neoclassical economics environment stemmed from her high school history classes, and undergraduate sociology courses as part of her major.

In the second of three professional development sessions, five of the six preservice teachers were exposed to the Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics (VNCE) (Siegried & Krueger, 2010)<sup>1</sup>. These standards adhere closely to the neoclassical paradigm, are used in many states as a foundation for individual state standards, and include 20 core concepts such as scarcity, decision making, trade, income, and fiscal and monetary policy. They were asked to read the summary of each standard in the table of contents, then mark whether they were familiar with the content, would be comfortable teaching the content or both. Of the five who attended; Tori, Jonny, and Nora had familiarity with nine or more of the twenty standards, and were comfortable teaching 6 of them on average. Cristina and Lizeth were comfortable with fewer than nine standards each and did not feel comfortable teaching any of the standards. The standards that preservice teachers were most familiar with were scarcity, specialization, and entrepreneurship, with each garnering a response from four out of five preservice teachers. The VNCE intentionally represent a neoclassical vision of economics (MacDonald & Siegfried, 2012; Siegfried & Krueger, 2010), and these three standards adhere to that paradigm by emphasizing the economic way of thinking (VanFossen & McGrew, 2011) and capitalist notions of entrepreneurship as a factor of production. No single standard had more than two preservice teachers indicate they would be comfortable teaching it.

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<sup>1</sup> One preservice teacher accompanied their class on a field trip during that time

## **DATA COLLECTION AND ISSUES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS**

The idea that data are just “‘out there’ waiting collection like so many rubbish bags on the pavement” (Merriam, 2009, pp. 85–86) is false. Collecting data is selecting data which involves all of the epistemological, theoretical, and methodological choices described in previous sections. In order to interpret a specific case with the level of depth required for effective triangulation and credibility, one must make use of a number of methods. Typically, in qualitative research this involves observations, interviews, and artifact analysis. As a researcher intimately involved with the participants I worked with, my observations necessarily fell somewhere on the participant observation continuum, though where I fell on the continuum varied depending on the observation (Glesne, 2011). From the ethnographic research tradition, I drew on the idea that observation should seek to make the strange familiar, and the familiar strange (Erickson, 1984). Likewise, I recognized that there is “no one ‘natural’ or ‘correct’ way to write about what one observes. Rather, because descriptions involve issues of perception and interpretation, different descriptions of similar or even the same situations and events are both possible and valuable” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, p. 6). These descriptions were member checked via semi-structured interviews, which offered the utility of describing “what you cannot see and to explore alternative explanations” (Glesne, 2011, p. 104) for observed phenomena. However, these two sources of data are incomplete without other artifacts to back up the conclusions drawn from the research process. These took the form of visual data (photography, maps, or participant or researcher created

data), documents, or archival materials. Each of these sources provided unique and important insight into concepts under study (Glesne, 2011).

## **Interviews**

Glesne (2011) invites researchers to “[t]hink of interviewing as the process of getting words to fly” (p. 102), much in the same way that a pitcher at a home run derby serves up ideal pitches for sluggers to take out of the park. The important components to getting words to fly include a clearly defined topic, questions that fit the topic, asking questions in an appropriate way, and ensuring adequate time. This enables the researcher to obtain information about “behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them” (Merriam, 2009, p. 88) that would otherwise be unobservable.

Participants were interviewed three times throughout the summer and fall. One interview took place in the early weeks of the Discovery teaching experience as preservice teachers were being trained for their roles in Discovery and began their coursework in the literacy across the disciplines class. This interview focused on background information about the participant including their demographic information, hometown, educational experiences, reasons for selecting the Urban Teacher program, their experience with economics academically, and their description of the purpose of social studies and the purpose of economics.

The second interview took place in the middle of the teaching experience at Discovery. At this point, preservice teachers had mostly completed their coursework in literacy across the disciplines and have taught for approximately three weeks in

Discovery. This interview was designed to ascertain the way their understanding of the purpose of social studies and economics had changed now that they had begun interacting with actual students. Additionally, it allowed participants to discuss the way they conceive of critical pedagogy in practice. It also allowed for some member-checking of observation data from the first few weeks.

The final interview occurred after Discovery and summer coursework were completed. This interview included questions about the nature of critical pedagogy after a summer of teaching and two courses that made use of critical pedagogy both theoretically and in practice. It again asked about the purpose of economics and social studies, to determine if responses had changed as participants taught for six weeks and taken three teacher education courses. Finally, it allowed for extensive member-checking of observation data, and other codes and themes that had emerged from the data collected throughout the summer.

In addition to these three formal interviews, I conducted a number of informal discussions with the participants as part of my role as teaching assistant in the literacy across the disciplines course and my efforts as a field supervisor in the Urban Teaching program.

### **Professional Development Sessions**

Discovery schedules numerous opportunities for professional development that were utilized to support participants and other students in the Urban Teacher program as they sought to implement a curriculum that aligns with their values and emerging

understanding of the purpose of social studies and critical pedagogy. The first two weeks that preservice teachers were employed by Discovery consisted of a number of these sessions, designed to familiarize them with Discovery's procedures and prepare them for teaching. While the session topics were determined by Discovery, they were taught by Instructional Coaches who were doctoral students at the university, thus they offered another opportunity for preservice teachers to explore the practical application of their respective purposes for teaching.

Throughout the summer, preservice teachers participated in weekly professional development sessions conducted by the Instructional Coach. In these sessions, the preservice teachers generally planned their upcoming lessons with the help of myself, the Instructional Coach, and the other preservice teachers teaching the same content. These experiences contributed to understandings of the way that purpose, pedagogy, and content intersect in the collaboration and planning phases of teaching.

Preservice teachers also attended three different content knowledge professional development sessions, one focused on critical pedagogy, one on economics, and one on geography. Data from the first two content knowledge sessions was used in this study. The critical pedagogy session involved a discussion over a piece by Neumann (2015) about critical pedagogy and wealth distribution in economics. Preservice teachers analyzed selected quotes from the article, described how the quotes applied to their classroom efforts, and how the quotes applied to their ideas about the purpose of economics. They then were asked to write one word that would be in a definition of

critical pedagogy. Finally, they listed topics that were important to cover in social studies that should be explored via critical pedagogy.

The economic content session was attended by Tori, Nora, Cristina, and Lizeth; the four teachers assigned to teach seventh and eighth grade students<sup>2</sup>. Seventh grade social studies classes had a content focus on African-American civil rights and eighth grade had a focus on Latinx civil rights. Given the content foci of these courses, and the expressed purposes of social studies that the preservice teachers had indicated, the economics professional development session focused on ways to link economic themes of the African-American and Latinx civil rights movement to present injustices. Using the economic concepts of inflation and income and the historical topics of the Delano Grape Strike and the 1963 March on Washington, the objective of the session was to demonstrate the utility of economics in the exploration of history, and to inform action in the present. In a long hallway with a tiled floor, I explained that every tile represented \$1,000 of income. I marked every ten tiles with a small piece of blue tape. To physically represent the distribution of income in society, students held notecards labelling them as specific groups.

Our first demonstration showed the average income by quintile in the United States today, so five participants held a notecard representing the bottom, second, middle, fourth, and top 20% of income earners. They were then told to stand at the tile that represented their average income, so the bottom 20% of earners, with an average income

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<sup>2</sup> Ernesto and Jonny taught journalism to rising ninth-graders and had a separate planning time where they met with English teachers

of \$11,000 stood at the 11<sup>th</sup> tile from our starting line, the next 20% stood at the 30<sup>th</sup> tile, the middle quintile at the 50<sup>th</sup> tile, the fourth quintile stood at the 82<sup>nd</sup> tile, and the top quintile stood at the 182<sup>nd</sup> tile. For reference purposes, I pointed out that if there was a top 5% card, they would have to leave the building and head to the adjacent building, and a top 1% card would have to walk several blocks away.

After demonstrating the way income is distributed in society, we used this same setup to adjust the racial wage gap for inflation from 1963 to the present. Students read the goals of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom to remind them that there was a concomitant message of economic equality with the famous mass movement for civil rights. While the dominant narrative often explores the impact of the march in terms of civil rights, connecting the March with the subsequent passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 (Hall, 2005), the success of the March's economic goals are often unexplored behind the messianic treatment of Martin Luther King and a handful of other Civil Rights leaders (Alridge, 2006). Three students were given a card that labeled them as average White income, Hispanic income, and Black income. In the late 1960s, these groups had an inflation adjusted<sup>3</sup> average income of \$50,000, \$38,000, and \$30,000 respectively, so students stood on the 50<sup>th</sup> tile, the 38<sup>th</sup> tile, and the 30<sup>th</sup> tile to represent the racial wage distribution shortly after the March on Washington<sup>4</sup>. Each 'group' then moved to their current average income, meaning the

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<sup>3</sup> 2012 dollars were used due to availability of data for all sources

<sup>4</sup> Income data for the Hispanic population was not available until later in the decade which precluded the use of 1963 data, however the Black-White gap remained relatively constant during the decade.

White representative moved up to the 57<sup>th</sup> tile, the Hispanic representative moved to the 39<sup>th</sup> tile, and the Black representative moved to the 33<sup>rd</sup> tile, effectively demonstrating that the racial income gap has not changed significantly in the 50 years after the March, countering the dominant narrative that the March was an unmitigated triumph and forcing us to grapple with the persistent structural racism that maintains white supremacy.

Similarly, we explored the demands of the Delano Grape Strike and modeled the inflation-adjusted income of agricultural workers at the time (\$10,000) their demand for a \$1.25 minimum wage (approximately \$18,000 annually) and the current \$7.25 minimum wage (approximately \$14,000 annually). This demonstration of the insignificant wage growth throughout the latter half of the twentieth century illustrated the progress (or lack thereof) of this movement in economic terms and helped to conceptualize the need for continued action to achieve the goals of the Grape Strike, the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, and to address rampant income inequality.

### **Classroom Observations**

Participant observation is an oxymoronic term due to the encouragement of both engagement and distance, involvement and detachment (Tedlock, 2000). By conceptualizing participant observation as a continuum stretching from the observer end “wherein the researcher has little to no interaction with those being studied” (Glesne, 2011, p. 64) to the full participant end where the researcher is “simultaneously a functioning member of the community undergoing investigation and an investigator” (Glesne, 2011, p. 65), researchers can better understand their unique role in the space



they are studying. As stated earlier, my role in observations varied depending on my level of support for the participants as they developed as teachers. While many observations leaned toward the observer end, many classroom observations are enhanced when the observer is part of the class, and that greater participation in the social world can allowed me as the researcher to be “more sensitive to the concerns and perspectives of those in the setting” (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 29).

Participants were observed teaching in their classrooms at least two times throughout the six weeks of Discovery. Observations included the entire 40 minute class period. I moved throughout the participant observer spectrum depending on the individual preservice teachers’ comfort with including me, my ability to contribute to the lesson, and a general enjoyment of being in a class with interesting and entertaining students. During the observation, field notes were written, hand-outs and other materials were collected, as were digital materials utilized in the lesson. Importantly, as this study only deals with instructional decisions of preservice teachers, my field notes only described what the preservice teachers said, did, or asked and did not include any student data.

Participant	Dates	Content
Lizeth	7/10, 7/12, 7/13, 7/14	Significant moments in African, American History, MLK and the Montgomery bus boycott, protest and the Civil Rights Movement, March on Washington and racial wealth distribution
Jonny	6/20, 7/7, 7/11, 7/12, 7/13	Privilege and Oppression and Stereotypes, Critical media literacy, Social Change elements, Social Change examples, Relevant social issues
Cristina	7/6, 7/7, 7/14	Immigration enforcement and gun rights, Cesar Chavez trial, Gentrification

Nora	6/22, 6/28, 7/11	Labor history, Migrant labor issues, Immigration
Ernesto	6/30, 7/10	Ethics in journalism and project selection, Investigative journalism
Tori	7/10, 7/14	Active citizenship, Forced sterilization

Table 1: Classroom Observations

### **Artifacts**

A variety of artifacts were collected in order to garner a richer picture of the data collected elsewhere, and to offer opportunities to conceptualize and reconceptualize themes. The most significant group of artifacts were the lesson plans submitted by preservice teachers. These were collected in order to better understand the type of pedagogy that participants intend to put into practice, and offered the opportunity to explore instructional choices outside of the nineteen observations I was able to do during the summer. They were also required to submit several reflections on their lessons for their university classes. Coursework from literacy across the disciplines, sociocultural foundations of education, and a fall semester social studies methods class was collected to provide information on participant understandings of critical pedagogy and the purpose of teaching. This coursework included in-class products, discussions, and assignments such as reflective journals and presentations. Of this coursework, their reflective journals in the form of blog postings were the largest source of data, particularly as they related to the purpose of teaching and the purpose of teaching social studies.

## Timeframe

The table below illustrates the majority of data collection by week throughout the summer and into the fall and spring semesters. While this table is not exhaustive as it does not include informal member checks that occurred in the day-to-day interactions during the program, it does include all data sources explicitly referenced in this project and therefore is intended to offer the reader some context when encountering these references in the chapters that follow:

	<b>6/2/17 - 6/9/17</b>	<b>6/10/17 - 6/17/17</b>	<b>6/18/17 - 6/24/17</b>	<b>6/25/17 - 7/1/17</b>	<b>7/2/17 - 7/8/17</b>
<b>Interviews</b>		Interview 1 - Jonny, Cristina, Ernesto, Nora, Tori	Interview 1 - Lizeth		
<b>Professional Development Sessions</b>			Critical Pedagogy Content Knowledge		Economics Content Knowledge
<b>Classroom Observations</b>			2	2	3
<b>Artifacts</b>	Literacy class blogs	Class brainstorm of purpose of social studies; Literacy class blogs	Lesson plans; Literacy class blogs	Lesson plans	Lesson plans
	<b>7/9/17 - 7/15/17</b>	<b>7/16/17 - 7/22/17</b>	<b>7/23/17 - 7/30/17</b>	<b>Fall Semester</b>	<b>Spring Semester</b>
<b>Interviews</b>	Interview 2 - Jonny, Cristina	Interview 2 - Tori, Ernesto	Interview 2 - Nora, Lizeth		Interview 3 - All participants
<b>Professional Development Sessions</b>					

<b>Classroom Observations</b>	12				
<b>Artifacts</b>	Lesson plans; Sociocultural class blogs	Lesson plans; Sociocultural class blogs	Sociocultural class blogs	Economics Methods class	

Table 2: Timeframe for data collection

## DATA ANALYSIS

M. Freeman (2017) asserts that all social science research “involves some sort of data identification, organization, selection, creation, recognition and some sort of transformation of what is identified, organized, selected, created, recognized into a statement about the topic of inquiry or ‘findings’” (p. 3). Analysis, therefore is the process that guides this identification and transformation. As opposed to quantitative research, where much of the analysis occurs at the end of the inquiry, “data analysis in qualitative studies is an ongoing process” (Mertens, 2015, p. 437) and thus data is reviewed and reflected on throughout the collection process, and should therefore alter or enhance the data collection process as well (Merriam, 2009). It is also important to consider the political dimensions of analysis. By choosing a mode of analysis, a researcher is inherently endorsing an epistemology and ontology (M. Freeman, 2017) and thus endorses a perspective consciously or unconsciously. By specifying an analytical framework and linking to the underlying epistemology, we can begin to “intentionally . . . disrupt the ‘qualitative positivism’” (M. Freeman, 2017, p. 5) that is common in many qualitative reports.

Rather than identify these frameworks as analytical methodologies, M. Freeman (2017) argues that we should think of them as ways of thinking, which allows researchers to avoid the reductionism that can be involved in limiting oneself to a singular analytical framework. While this study made use of two main ways of thinking, I describe them “not for the purpose of fixing them as methods, but to enable their circulation, adaptation, and even, their transformation” (p. 5). In particular, I drew on thematic or categorical ways of thinking as well as narrative ways of thinking. Thematic/categorical thinking focuses on “searching through the data for themes and patterns” (Glesne, 2011, p. 187) which “helps to separate out units of data that can stand alone often as a way to contrast or relate them to other units of data” (M. Freeman, 2017, p. 8). Narrative ways of thinking vary across disciplines, but focus on “how the storyteller links experiences and circumstances together to make meaning” (Glesne, 2011, p. 186). For the purpose of this study, I attended to the way preservice teachers engaged with and described narratives in social studies and society more broadly. This way of thinking utilizes literary devices such as “topics, plots, themes, beginnings, middles, ends, and other border features that are assumed to be the defining characteristics of stories” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009, p. 226). By thinking about the stories they told (and did not tell, or did not position as stories) I could better analyze their conceptualization of the purpose of economics and its relationship to critical pedagogy.

Initial data was explored by “reading and thinking and making notes” (Mertens, 2015, p. 438) or memoing which can take a variety of forms as the researcher attempts to parse meaning and select data for coding (Glesne, 2011). Early coding was rudimentary

and strived to be simple “knowing that with use, [codes] will become appropriately complex” (Glesne, 2011, p. 191). As more data was analyzed and more sources of data were coded, codes were categorized and organized as necessary.

## **RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY**

In case study research, “[t]he researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. This has its advantages” (Merriam, 2009, p. 52) including a particular expertise or familiarity with the unit of analysis. In my case, my interest in economics and urban teaching stems from my time teaching economics in an urban setting and my experience with marginalized students beginning to understand structural inequality and speak back to their conditions via the language of power. Likewise, my interest in preservice teachers stems from my desire to become a teacher educator and my time working as an instructor and field supervisor of preservice teachers. These strengths of expertise and familiarity however, can be a double-edged sword as my biases can affect the way I interpret responses and my position as authority figure in the program could color the responses of participants. In addition, I conform to a host of societal norms that have and continue to be used to ‘other’ marginalized groups. Any white, male, cis-hetero researcher should be concerned with persistent issues of colonialism in research and questions of who speaks through and who benefits from their research.

Perhaps the most significant component of my positionality, with respect to conditions of power in qualitative research was my role within the Urban Teaching program. In relation to these preservice teachers I either was or would serve as a

Teacher's Assistant, course instructor (though this did not occur until the following Spring), field supervisor/evaluator in the Fall semester, mentor, job reference, state exam tutor, and confidant. While I cannot expect to know every way that my position affected the data I collected, I include the following examples of how my influence and relative authority over these preservice teachers might skew the data I collected. For convenience, I used the class Learner Management System to send out a voluntary request for interviews. I conducted professional development sessions on economics during Discovery department meetings, including choosing a reading to assign. I conducted a methods class on economics during their Fall semester methods course which is typical of my service as a Teacher's Assistant, but relevant to this discussion nonetheless. I often discussed their purpose for teaching and teaching social studies as their field supervisor in an attempt to promote reflective thinking and develop them as pedagogues. While I respect the autonomy and agency of these preservice teachers and believe I did everything in my power to foster a relationship where they felt comfortable to participate or not participate in the study and to be as honest as possible in their responses, I cannot assume that my relative power in the Urban Teaching program was without impact on our shared data.

### **PILOT STUDIES**

I completed several pilot studies that considered the role of economics in the specific programmatic context of this urban teaching program. My earliest exploration into the way that economics fit into social studies explored the type of economic content

that is taught in a Social Studies methods course that is focused specifically on preparing preservice teachers for an urban environment, and how preservice teachers in an urban teacher preparation program see the subject of economics pertaining to their broader goals for eventual teaching practice. The results of that general, interpretive study found that disciplines in the method course were segregated, ignoring the integrative potential of social studies disciplines. Also, history was privileged over other disciplines to a great extent, and every discipline other than history was dealt with in a theoretical manner, and ignoring the potential for practical application.

A second pilot study utilized ethnographic methods to examine the way in which preservice teachers in an urban teacher preparation program conceptualized the role of economics. Specifically, I wanted to see what their purpose was for teaching; whether that matched the purposes of the program, and to see how economics fit in that purpose both theoretically and practically. The results of this study showed that while preservice teachers in this program had ideals of both economics and social studies that were humanizing, relevant, and action-oriented; however, in practice, their lessons showed that they either ignored the economic potential of social studies in the concepts and topics they taught, or they compartmentalized economics and ignored its broader application that might fit with their purpose for teaching social studies.

The intersection between critical consciousness (Freire, 2005a) and Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) (Shulman, 2004) was the focus of a third pilot study. In this quantitative study, my research question related to preservice teachers' conceptualization of economics, their critical consciousness as it relates to economics, and their ability to



turn that critical consciousness into classroom practice. Teachers in this study had a purpose for teaching. They expressed a desire to challenge dominant narratives, and to pursue relevant instruction with students who have been marginalized. Unfortunately, the ability of these teachers to put their purpose into action was blunted by their inability to bring critical narratives into economics class due to a limited or specific content background. Whether they had no formal economics training, or a great deal of market-based neoclassical economics education, preservice teachers struggled to fully integrate their critical consciousness into economics pedagogy to a level that was satisfactory to them. They had only a few examples from their methods course of ways to put their critical consciousness into action, and many of their constructed lessons reflected their inability to merge purpose and pedagogy. It should be noted that this is a difficult thing to do for an experienced teacher, and it can (and should) be the work of a career to meld critical consciousness and pedagogical consciousness in ways that are meaningful to students. Therefore, preparing teachers to teach a critical version of economics requires more than just PCK. It requires an analysis of purpose, a consideration of power and dominant narratives, and a merging of content and pedagogy.

These pilot studies engaged many of the themes of this work, namely a consideration of the place of economics within social studies, preservice teachers' conceptualizations of economics, critical consciousness and pedagogy, and an overall emphasis on economics as an understudied discipline. In conducting these studies, my belief that economics is a vital part of social studies, and that it has the potential to be truly transformative as part of a critical pedagogy was strengthened. Additionally, I saw

the need for an emphasis on economics pedagogy, content knowledge, and PCK, given the limited familiarity that most preservice teachers had with the discipline; but, similar to the findings of Swan and Hicks (2006), I saw the need to build PCK with attention to purpose, and that purpose was the most important factor in developing the PCK of economics teachers.

## CHAPTER 4: ECONOMICS IN THE NOW: ECONOMICS FOR SOCIAL ANALYSIS EXCLUSIVELY IN THE PRESENT

“Now” is not only a cognitive illusion but also a mathematical trick, related to how we define space and time quantitatively. One way of seeing this is to recognize that the notion of “present,” as sandwiched between past and future, is simply a useful hoax. After all, if the present is a moment in time without duration, it can’t exist. What does exist is the recent memory of the immediate past and the expectation of the near future. We link past and future through the conceptual notion of a present, of “now.” But all that we have is the accumulated memory of the past—stored in biological or various recording devices—and the expectation of the future.

*The Island of Knowledge: The Limits of Science and the Search for Meaning*, Marcelo Gleiser

### INTRODUCTION

The landscape of social studies education literature is devoid of economics discussion in general (S. Miller & VanFossen, 2008), and history (Stanley, 2001), and to a lesser extent other disciplines under the social studies umbrella receive far more research attention than economics (Ayers, 2015). This is a problem given the potential for economics education to prepare students for social roles (Schug & Walstad, 1991) or for the informed decision-making necessary for citizenship (S. Miller & VanFossen, 2008; VanFossen, 2000).

The existing literature on economics education points to two important themes, however, with respect to content knowledge and the function of economics. One, social studies teachers lack exposure to formal economics instruction; and two, the version of economics that is emphasized conforms to the dominant, neoclassical narrative.

While the literature is limited, nearly every exploration into teachers’ content knowledge and previous experience with economics concludes that social studies teachers have limited coursework in economics. Scahill and Melican (2005) surveyed AP

economics instructors and found that “no more than 20 percent of . . . respondents had received undergraduate instruction that many professional economists consider sufficient to teach AP economics” (p. 94) and nearly thirty percent of those surveyed had taken three or fewer economics courses. The limited coursework for teachers of an advanced version of economics, ostensibly taught at a college level, heralds even more inadequate coursework for teachers of on-level economics.. Data from New York teachers indicate that economic classes in general were taught by cross-disciplinary teachers who had taken, on average, 2.49 courses in economics and 13% of teachers had never taken an economics course (Eisenhauer & Zaporowski, 1994). Other studies have confirmed this relative lack of preparation via economic coursework (Dumas, Evans, & Weible, 1997; Walstad & Kourilsky, 1999). This lack of coursework manifests in preservice teachers who are often unfamiliar with economics content (Ayers, 2016; Joshi & Marri, 2006), and are in general ill-prepared to teach the subject in comparison to other disciplines within social studies (Lynch, 1994).

Additionally, the limited economic content that teachers are exposed to via coursework and teacher preparation is steeped in the neoclassical paradigm of economics. From the university classroom (Earle, Moran, & Ward-Perkins, 2016), to the textbooks in use in high schools and universities (Lee & Keen, 2004; Leet & Lopus, 2007), to the national and state standards that frame the high school economics curriculum (MacDonald & Siegfried, 2012; National Council for Economic Education, 2010), neoclassical economics is the lens through which the world is read economically. This emphasis on neoclassical economics in coursework and the formal curriculum becomes

the curriculum-in-use in economics classrooms (Khayum, Valentine, & Friesner, 2006), and thus the next generation of economics teachers not only has very limited content knowledge in economics, but the content knowledge that they have is almost exclusively confined to the neoclassical paradigm.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The preservice teachers in this case study reflected the contention by the literature that many preservice social studies teachers lack coursework in economics. However, they still had a number of important views on the function of economics within social studies education. Two themes were instrumental in understanding the way they viewed economics as a subset of social studies. Economics was important as a way to scrutinize society, part of a vision for social studies that conforms to critical pedagogy's emphasis on *social analysis*. This means that the world must be read dialectically (c.f. Freire, 1993), with an emphasis on the way that institutions maintain hegemony (McLaren, 2015) and reproduce inequality along raced, gendered, and classed lines (Bowles & Gintis, 2011; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Weiler, 1988).

While the preservice teachers in this case study emphasized economics as a way to better analyze societal injustice, they often failed to include economics as a tool for understanding action in the present and future that would work against the dominant themes of the era (Freire, 2005a). In this way, the idea of a *counter-hegemonic stance* as a component of the ideological clarity they bring to their purpose for teaching was an important frame for interrogating their beliefs. A *counter-hegemonic* stance represents

the desire to “contest and transform the exclusionary, harmful, and fundamentally undemocratic values and beliefs that inform dominant educational practices in the United States” (Bartolomé, 2004, p. 98).

### Research Question and Findings Summary

This chapter is framed around the research question that asks how content knowledge and previous experience with economics inform the way preservice teachers understand the function of economics within social studies education. The data revealed two important themes, summarized in Figure 4. First, economics was an important component of social studies as a means to analyze society, however, this analysis was largely confined to the present. They rarely analyzed the past through an economic lens despite their stated intention to use social studies to do just that. Second, economics was not included in their ideas about social studies as an active practice that sought to alter the future of society for justice. While their purpose for teaching social studies often centered on a counter-hegemonic curriculum; economics was rarely included in this vision of social studies.



Figure 4: The Function of Economics within Social Studies Education

Through the various ways that preservice teachers described the function of economics within social studies, three findings emerged. One, economics *can* be a significant part of social studies education that seeks to analyze society, understand the past, and take action; two, limited familiarity and critical content knowledge impedes the way in which economics functions within social studies education, particularly as a means to understand the past and take action in the present; and three, social studies teacher education that strives to enhance political and ideological clarity must concomitantly focus on economics content and economic integration into the broader purpose for social studies.

#### **WHAT'S GOING ON: AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING, AND JUSTICE IN SOCIETY**

Throughout this study, preservice teachers articulated a conceptualization of economics within social studies that was used for *social analysis*. *Social analysis* includes the ability to see and question forces that maintain dominance and oppression in society (McLaren, 2015), and for these preservice teachers this component of critical pedagogy manifested in three ways. They felt economics specifically and social studies more broadly would make students aware of their society, understand the way that it functioned, and interrogate it to determine whether or not it was functioning in a just manner. At times, they described this function of economics as a specific component of critical pedagogy, and other times it they simply alluded to it, but these three elements of *social analysis* were important components of a critical pedagogical curriculum “shaped by problems that face teachers and students in their effort to live just and ethical lives” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 17). These elements of social analysis were present in conversations about of the purpose of social studies and economics in interviews and professional

development sessions, and were also present in preservice-teacher generated class artifacts and blogs.

### **Talk to Me So You Can See: Economics and Social Studies to be Aware of Social Forces**

There was a consistent emphasis on social studies as a tool to understand society by these preservice teachers, and this emphasis was clear in their interviews, course artifacts, blog postings, and professional development sessions. When asked about the purpose of social studies, Nora responded that “I’m really just trying to study society. I thought from social studies, you get to do that” (interview, 6/16/17) in a way that shows students “why certain things happen the way they happen, [and] how society operates” (interview, 3/16/18). Ernesto likewise responded that “it is the study of what’s going on in the world” (interview, 6/16/17). In the first of three professional development sessions, which focused on the role of critical pedagogy in social studies and economics, students responded to quotes from an article that described an instructional plan about teaching wealth distribution via critical pedagogy (Neumann, 2015). Some of their responses included their purpose for teaching social studies as a way to make sure students are informed about “words like racism, ageism, oppression, etc.” because “I want [students] to be well informed” (PD1 artifact, 6/22/17). Additionally, they saw social studies as a way to show “contemporary issues which they can write and discuss their thoughts on. I want [students] to think about the world and time they live in” (PD1 artifact, 6/22/17). In blog postings, Lizeth wrote that she wanted students to “be able to think critically about current events” (blog posting, 6/1/17). These descriptions of social studies for *social*



*analysis* revealed the idea that social studies was a lens to view the world, and a way to begin to explore themes of the current era.

This theme of social studies for social awareness was reflected in the way that preservice teachers articulated their understanding of the function of economics within social studies education. In interviews and professional development sessions, they described some unique tools of economics that could aid in an awareness of society through social studies education. Tori described the purpose of economics as allowing students to understand the way the economy works in such a way that “a student could actually go out and explain it to someone else” and “to make it more relatable” (interview, 6/16/17). For Nora, economics “ties into understanding of how society works, I think economics is fundamental part of that” (interview, 6/16/17). Cristina felt that the purpose was to “know about the system or even what are the rights and rules about it” (interview, 6/10/17). For Ernesto, the purpose of economics was to “be able to understand this complex system that we have that pretty much involves trade and income and everything that allows us to have a more sustainable life and a livable life” (interview, 6/16/17). In the first professional development session, preservice teachers were prompted to think about how critical pedagogy and economics fit together. Their responses included a number of references to economics as a way to build awareness of social forces such as “knowing how economic systems work,” “understand wealth distribution in the real work”, and “providing the tools needed to begin understanding the ‘power’ and the ‘oppression’” (PD1 artifact, 6/22/17). These responses indicate that

economics was conceived of as a way to further understand society, and to do so with the specific attention to economic themes.

### **What's Happening Brother: Economics and Social Studies to Understand the Way Social Forces Operate**

While the preservice teachers had a great deal to say about the way that economics and social studies could be used to be aware of society and social issues, they quickly moved on to describing how both social studies and economics could be used to determine the way that forces in society worked, and did so in interviews, class discussions, and blog postings. Ernesto emphasized this while decrying his peers' "lack of understanding of the system. It's a lack of understanding of how everything around us works and how society works as well" (interview, 6/16/17). Nora echoed this functionalist imperative by saying, "a big part of [the purpose of social studies] is to try to understand how your society works and also projecting that into a more global view" (interview, 6/16/17). In Tori's words, social studies was an important discipline because "I want to know all about the system, the situations and how to handle them . . . not just education, but more current situations that we encounter" (interview, 6/16/17), evincing a desire to understand the impact of social forces specifically in the present. For Lizeth, the breadth of social studies allowed students to see how social forces operate, she stated that social studies was "so broad and extensive . . . there's so many different things you get to learn within this topic" and therefore it allowed students to "learn and analyze all these different types of context and events" (interview, 6/22/17) In a class session, students generated a list of reasons for teaching social studies that included it's utility in

understanding “policy”, “conflict”, “movements” and “why society acts the way it does” (class artifact, 6/13/17).

In blog postings, preservice teachers further developed these ideas. Ernesto talked about social studies bringing about a “newfound sociopolitical stance since he/she will have thought about their unique place in the world and the various conflicts that stem from it” (blog posting, 6/1/17). Similarly, Jonny felt social studies teachers should “strive to teach socially conscious curriculum that empowers students to be thinkers” (blog posting, 6/7/17). Social studies, then, afforded these preservice teachers the opportunity to not only analyze society as it exists, but to conceptualize the methods by which it functions. This *social analysis* would be fundamental to the idea of justice that preservice teachers would later articulate, a necessary theoretical underpinning to their *counter-hegemonic stance*.

The emphasis on social studies as a tool to enhance consciousness of the machinations of social processes were evident in descriptions of the purpose of economics as well. In interviews and professional development sessions, economics was continually described as a path to understanding the function of social processes. In a written response to an article used in the first professional development session, preservice teachers described economics as a way to “teach students the fundamentals of knowing how economics systems work [and] how the systems impact their communities” (PD1 artifact, 6/22/17). In interviews, preservice teachers used similar descriptions. Nora thought about the purpose of economics in terms of understanding “capitalist society . . . and how it actually works in practice” (interview, 6/16/17). Lizeth also found economics

to be of use in understanding the function of society, particularly with the minimum wage and inflation. For her, economics helped understand

How all these things just keep increasing in price yet the minimum wage doesn't have that much of a difference over time, and how that affects so many people right now, so many people who are just struggling to get by and this minimum wage just isn't helping. (interview, 7/30/17)

Cristina sounded a similar conspiratorial note by stating that economics could be a tool to investigate problems with the way the system functioned, saying "I always feel the system is up to something and I personally feel that it's to keep people ignorant . . . you're messing around with their money, but you don't inform them about how does the money work or how does the system work" (interview, 6/10/17). These responses show that the preservice teachers were not only using economics to see the world as it is, but to consider the processes that keep it that way. This understanding of systemic functions also informed their vision for economics and social studies as a way to think about the relative justice in society.

### **Only Love can Conquer Hate: Economics and Social Studies to Conceptualize Justice**

Perhaps the most prevalent descriptor of the purpose of social studies was a way to analyze society within a framework of justice. Preservice teachers talked about social studies as a way to critique injustices that they saw in the world, or to promote a vision of social justice that would later inform the transformative purpose of social studies through their *counter-hegemonic stance*. Economics, then, allowed these teachers to talk about justice economically with respect to class, income and wealth. These descriptions of the purpose of social studies as a way to shine a light on injustice were demonstrated in blog

postings, interviews, and professional development sessions. Importantly, their conceptualization of justice followed at least two paths: justice through student voice and multiple perspectives, or recognizing the value of student experience and including marginalized groups in the curriculum; and justice through *social analysis*, or the ability to “perceive critically the themes of their time” (Freire, 2005a, p. 6).

### ***Justice through Student Voice and Multiple Perspectives***

In a blog entry on the importance of discussion in social studies, Tori described social studies as a place to “remember that somebodies voice is going to be left behind or not fully explored. Having these authentic discussions will allow for the underrepresented to have a spokesperson of sort” (blog posting, 6/15/17). Elsewhere she explained that “[a]s a history teacher, it is extremely important to me that my students are aware of their social capital and worth not only in mainstream society but also in their families, peer groups, etc.” (blog posting, 6/1/17). Nora emphasized this vision of justice as well writing, “we must strive to teach with cultural relevance in mind, to teach with the understanding that [social studies] is not a single story and that our students have the right to be represented” (blog posting, 6/12/17). After having taught for several weeks, Cristina reiterated her purpose for teaching social studies by saying “I still feel so very strongly about [social studies] being about helping students to self-advocate, and to promote social justice” (interview, 7/13/17).

Justice also included notions of including marginalized perspectives in the curriculum. Nora documented her vision of social studies as a way to “consider whose

voices are not heard, and whose faces are not shown” and to combat the “current social studies curriculum [that is] dominated by the narratives of one person – the exceptional white man” (blog posting, 6/12/17). Ernesto described the purpose for teaching social studies as a way for teachers to be more culturally relevant because “[c]ulturally relevant teachers will . . . be more aware of their perceptions on their own students and view the students’ diversity and individual differences as an opportunity rather than a worry” (blog posting, 6/2/17). Likewise, Jonny wrote that “[a]s an aspiring Social Studies teacher, it is my goal to make history as real and well-rounded as possible” (blog posting, 6/12/17). After having spent some time in the classroom, Ernesto further clarified this view by describing how he came to appreciate:

the importance of empathy and highlighting experiences while I’m talking about social studies, just because I feel like there’s a lot to gain there, it’s one of those things where an educator can teach it but at the same time, in order to be successful . . . he also needs to kind of learn the process of it from your students, from other people (interview, 7/21/17).

By emphasizing justice through inclusiveness in social studies, and emphasizing cultural relevance to students’ lives and curriculum, preservice teachers voiced a purpose for social studies that extended beyond the official knowledge (Apple, 2000) and represented a burgeoning ideological clarity (Bartolomé, 2004) about the nature of marginalized students and traditional representations in the curriculum that would inform their *counter-hegemonic* stance.

### ***Justice through Social Analysis***

Quoting and responding to an article on critical pedagogy in a professional development session, one of the preservice teachers wrote, “This is what and who I want my students to be: ‘critical, self-reflective, knowledgeable, and willing to make moral

judgments and act in a socially responsible way' (Neumann, 2015, p. 238). So, modeling and teaching that to the best of my ability is really important in my classroom" (PD 1 artifact, 6/22/17). In a blog entry, Jonny outlined her goal for social studies by saying that "teachers should strive to teach socially conscious curriculum that empowers students to be thinkers" (blog posting, 6/7/17). Lizeth similarly described a purpose for teaching social studies as ensuring "that my kids are interested in what we are learning but also . . . for them to be able to think critically about current events" (blog posting, 6/1/17). Jonny explained in an interview after she began teaching that her students have started to attain this purpose for social studies and that

a lot of them, in . . . their papers wrote, "I used to just believe whatever my parents said, I used to just believe whatever my friends said, but now that I'm looking at some of the stuff that we're doing in class, like I know that – I just took something at face value instead of being critical of what I'm seeing". That was really awesome. (interview, 7/11/17)

For these preservice teachers, justice within their purpose for social studies meant a focused and direct use of the discipline to critically evaluate the world around them.

### ***Justice in Economics***

Descriptions of the purpose of economics as a means to conceptualize justice were also common, in keeping with their purposes for teaching social studies. In interviews, blogs, and professional development sessions, preservice teachers continually described the purpose of economics as a lens through which society could be analyzed with respect to justice. Economic justice is a sub-concept of social justice (Lucey & Laney, 2009), which includes recognizing intergroup economic disparities and considering redistributive measures to address these disparities (Fraser, 1997), and fulfills

tenets of critical pedagogy that are “fundamentally concerned with understanding the relationship between power and knowledge” (McLaren, 2015, p. 144). These components of economics for justice were prevalent in broad terms as well as with respect to specific issues analyzed through economics. Nora included broad ideas of systemic justice, recognition, redistribution, and power as she described the purpose of economics as

part of being cognizant of systems at work that dictate the opportunities they have as students or . . . things available to them. Just making sure that they’re aware of those so that if they see some kind of injustice, again, it’s like the social justice mindset, you see an injustice maybe you can do something about it because you understand how that injustice came about, from an economics perspective.  
(interview, 6/16/17)

Jonny also felt that economics was a way to touch on “classes and what it means to be in a certain class and the implications that has in social life” (interview, 7/11/17), demonstrating that economics could analyze the way that economic class had the power to affect other aspects of life. In the first professional development session, preservice teachers explained that economics should “produce those self-reflective and knowledgeable citizens” who are “[c]ritical of economic policy and procedures, [and] sympathetic to economic issues” (PD1 artifact, 6/22/17). It should also allow students to explore “how economic systems work, [and] also discuss and question how the systems impact their communities” (PD1 artifact, 6/22/17). These responses show an emphasis on economics as a way to build the critical, analytic perspectives to address local and relevant injustices.

There were also specific topics that economics could be used to explore. Cristina saw economics as a tool to analyze how “some schools get more money than other schools” yet this is unquestioned because people “don’t have much knowledge about



economics or how does the money flow or the politics behind it” (interview, 6/10/17).

The relationship between wealth, education funding, and justice is a common one among critical educational theorists (McLaren, 2015), and showed her desire to use economics to enhance recognition of this imbalance. Lizeth considered economics as not limited to “business and finance processes” but offering a way to explore “a lot of economic disadvantage topics in there, like maybe even some types of urban development issues that are better taught through economics” (interview, 6/22/17), again demonstrating the use of economics to build recognition of injustice, with particular attention to urban development. Ernesto, in an interview reflecting on his experience teaching, talked about how economics is more than just simple dollars and cents, but allows for consideration of broader themes:

I was once talking to a student about [economics] and she kind of brought up the idea how one thing she’s always questioned is why is it that when we talk about immigrants or disenfranchisement in our society, we always seem to kind of think on the economic benefits that we gain from them, rather than just perceiving them as human beings, as people who can . . . become part of our culture and society . . . but instead we try to develop ideas like . . . “how can we sell it to the public, to be beneficial to us”. . . . I think it’s valuable, in the sense that, then you can ask these big idea questions about today (interview, 7/21/17).

This was a trenchant analysis of the inherent value that policy makers and politicians place on economics. He is arguing for a more human approach to policy, rather than reducing immigrants to dollars and sense as debate rages over this particular political issue.

Tori used economics to take a critical perspective on the issue of wealth and philanthropy fit with her purpose for economics, explaining that billionaires “are able to gain sympathy from Americans by being philanthropists, [but] these types of people

usually make millions and donate hundreds. In teaching this in an economic class, I feel like it would be important to emphasize how the elites have used their philanthropy work in order to excuse certain behavior” (blog posting, 8/10/17). This description of the utility of economics to avoid superficial characterizations of the wealthy and instead consider how even in giving away their wealth, they exert power and receive forms of capital was perceptive and demonstrated the way that economic knowledge could expose multifaceted power dynamics. Finally, in a professional development session on critical pedagogy in economics, this purpose of teaching economics to conceptualize justice was described with respect to specific concepts, such as allowing students to see “economics within their community. For example, gentrification and the disproportion of wealth and political influence – things only well informed individuals can understand” (PD1 artifact). Again, this use of economics to better recognize the disparate impact of gentrification and the way extreme wealth has become equivalent to political power shows that economics fit a very specific and critical vision of their justice-oriented purpose.

Justice, for these preservice teachers, was an important component of a purpose for social studies that included awareness of social forces and an understanding of the way those forces operate. Specifically, they conceptualized the purpose of social studies as a way to give students a voice, include marginalized perspectives, and promote critical *social analysis*. Economics functioned within this vision of social studies by a lens to see society, a framework for understanding its operation, and specific areas to emphasize when conceptualizing justice in society. Despite limited content knowledge, economics

was still an important component of these preservice teachers' purpose for teaching social studies when applied to the present time.

#### **SOCIAL STUDIES EXTENDING BEYOND ECONOMICS: THE RECENT MEMORY OF THE IMMEDIATE PAST AND THE EXPECTATION OF THE NEAR FUTURE**

In contrast to the concomitant description of the purpose of social studies and economics in the present as a way to analyze society, evaluate its operation, and conceptualize justice, a temporal shift to either the past or the future caused a disjuncture between the purposes of social studies and economics. While the purpose of social studies was fluidly articulated as having relevance in the past and to inform action in the future via citizenship practices; discussion of the purpose of economics almost never veered from the present described in the previous section. This failure to conceptualize the utility of economics in the past is in keeping with a general failure of the discipline of economics to explore the past, either in economic models (c.f. Bögenhold, 2010; Hake, 2009; John King, 2012) or the history of economic thought (c.f. Earle et al., 2016; Grimes, 2009; Hodgson, 2001; Peart & Levy, 2005), but the noticeable gap between social studies informing civic action and the silence surrounding economics' potential role in that action is significant. Freire writes that in order to achieve praxis, people must “emerge from time, discover temporality, and free themselves from ‘today’” (2005, p. 4). Thus, the rupture between social studies and the function of economics in the past and future will inhibit the ability of preservice teachers to turn their *counter-hegemonic stance* into “some type of action to ‘subvert the system’ and do right by their students” (Bartolomé, 2004, p. 118). The juxtaposition of the purpose of social studies and

economics in the past and future was evident in interviews about of the purpose of social studies and economics, professional development sessions, as well as preservice-teacher generated class artifacts and blogs.

### **Social Studies to Critically Evaluate the Past**

Given the traditional emphasis on history as the preeminent discipline within social studies (Halvorsen, 2013; Stanley, 2001) it is not surprising that preservice teachers were quick to extend the purpose of social studies beyond the present as a way to understand and learn from the past. In keeping with the critical orientation of the teacher preparation program that these preservice teachers were a part of, they insisted on a vision of social studies that critically evaluated the past and challenged dominant narratives (Salinas & Blevins, 2014; Wertsch, 2000) that have been promoted through a nationalist, Eurocentric curriculum (Brown & Au, 2014; Loewen, 2008; Takaki, 2008).

While a number of preservice teachers responded to questions about the purpose of social studies with some variance of the “whole cliché, like, you have to know what the past looks like in order to prepare for the future” (Jonny, interview, 6/14/17) or to “learn about the past or the history of our country or the people before us, learn from their mistakes and from those mistakes, try to make a better future” (Cristina, interview, 6/10/17); their responses quickly fashioned this understanding into a way of critiquing the past and present. After describing the purpose of social studies as “a real way to talk about things from the past” (Lizeth, interview, 7/30/17), Lizeth went on to give an example about a conversation with her boyfriend about what seemed like an increase in

protest marches. She said, “pretty much everything that has changed has come to the point of people having to [march] and protesting to get something to be changed within the law” (interview, 7/30/17). This quick turn from simply knowing about the past to avoid the “mistakes of the past” (class artifact, 6/13/17) to understanding action in the past in pursuit of justice would be emphasized in blog postings and professional development sessions as well. Often this context and analysis involved “understanding . . . the Latinx civil rights movement” (PD1 artifact, 6/13/17) or other protest movements in contrast to “most social studies classes [which] focus too much on dates/people” (PD1 artifact, 6/13/17). Lizeth concurred, writing that “[h]istory should be about thinking critically and analyzing the situations, people, objects and ideas in the past” (blog posting, 6/6/17). Nora elaborated on a critical use of social studies to evaluate the past by writing that “[i]t is important to recognize the significance of the social contexts in which historical events occurred, and not solely the people (or more specifically, the men) we have thus far considered to be significant” (blog posting, 6/1/17). Following up on this point, Nora reiterated that she saw “our understanding of social studies now as very limited . . . we kind of take away the greater context by just focusing on the [state standards] or just focusing on specific people” (interview, 3/16/18).

In addition to an emphasis on the purpose of social studies as a way to explore the past in its complexity, there was a specific emphasis on the concept of studying the past in order to contest the “Euro-centric and white American experience [that] is dominant in most American classrooms” (Ernesto, blog posting, 6/1/17). For these teachers it was “imperative to consider who is absent from any given narrative. It is important to

consider whose voices are not heard, and whose faces are not shown” (Nora, blog posting, 6/12/17). Jonny reflected on her own experience in school and on reading the introduction to Takaki’s (2008) *A Different Mirror* recalling, “[my teacher] would always ask the class who was missing from or misrepresented in the source. He bluntly told the class that, 90% of the time, the answer would be as simple as women, people of color, or children” (blog posting, 6/12/17). Lizeth challenged dominant narratives through classroom practices that are “monologic and only talk about one perspective” which corresponded with “how I was taught to think until an eighth grade social studies teacher came along. He challenged us to question everything that had been taught before and why we listened to it without questioning it just because a teacher told us that is what happened in history” (blog posting, 6/15/17). These emphases on the purpose of social studies as a means to challenge traditional ways of teaching history and dominant narratives within the curriculum were often a pretense to engage in the next theme that arose from the data: social studies for active citizenship.

### **Social Studies as Active Citizenship**

Preservice teachers in this study conceptualized the purpose of social studies as both a component of good citizenship, and a springboard to action in the face of injustice. Social studies as a discipline, and public education in general have often been described as vital components of preparing an active knowledgeable citizenry (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Dewey, 1916; Parker, 2003). This imperative leads to questions about the kind of citizen that schools prepare (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), including personally

responsible citizens, participatory citizens, and justice-oriented citizens. Abowitz and Harnish (2006) categorize citizenship frameworks as falling into more common categories of civic republican or liberal frameworks and less common transnational and critical citizenship discourses. Important to this study is the category of critical citizenship discourses which “raise issues of membership, identity, and engagement in creative, productive ways” (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006, p. 666). This engagement is in keeping with ideas of critical multicultural citizenship where “citizens engage in meaningful deliberation about the ideals of democracy and gaps in its realization in everyday life and pursue social action to close these gaps” (Castro, 2013, pp. 222–223). In keeping with these elements, an early literacy class session produced a brainstormed list of the purposes of social studies, and among the first items listed were “Active, democratic participation” and “civil disobedience” (class artifact, 6/13/17). The idea of social studies for citizenship and social studies for action were prevalent in blog postings, interviews, and professional development sessions.

Citizenship was often explicitly stated as a purpose for social studies, and usually came up immediately when asked what social studies was for. Cristina described the purpose of social studies as helping “to become better citizens” (interview, 6/10/17) who “are able to make better, well-informed decisions when it comes to politics and to give back to their community” (interview, 3/15/18). In a blog post, Jonny wrote that dialogic teaching fit her desire to “promote democratic participation [and] help students build their skills as a productive citizen in a democratic society” (blog posting, 6/15/17) Later, she continued to expand on her purpose for teaching social studies by saying “I strive to

empower my students to be active citizens and practice self-advocacy through the use of problem-posing and liberating education” (blog posting, 7/13/17). Lizeth similarly wrote about “one of my biggest and main goals will be to get my students to become active participants in our country’s democracy . . . I like knowing that I am getting prepared to get students to think critically and be active citizens” (blog posting, 6/28/17). Also in a professional development session, preservice teachers utilized this language to explain that one of their “main goals as a social studies teacher” was to get “students to be active citizens through democratic participation” (PD1 artifact, 6/13/17). These references to citizenship seem to fall under the category of participatory citizenship, where “good citizens [are] those who actively participate in the civic affairs and the social life of the community at local, state, and national levels” (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 241), yet based on their understanding of the use of social studies to be aware of social forces, to understand how they operate, and to promote justice there is more to these descriptions of active participation in democracy. This is alluded to when Jonny begins to reveal a burgeoning counter-hegemonic stance (Bartolomé, 2004), by beginning to cite specific elements that have informed her ideological clarity, including her desire to pursue problem-posing (Freire, 1993) and liberating education (Shor & Freire, 1987). Their deliberation over the ideals of democracy previously explored and their desire to take action based on these ideals reveal a more critical citizenship (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Castro, 2010). These elements of a critical and active vision of social studies became clearer when preservice teachers moved beyond the explicit language of citizenship and



spoke and wrote of what impact they wanted social studies to have on the future of society.

Many of the visions of the future relied on a purpose of social studies that took the lessons of the past and applied them to future action. For Cristina, “the purpose of social studies is to learn about the past or the history of our country or the people before us, learn from their mistakes and from those mistakes, try to make a better future for future generations” (interview, 6/10/17). Nora built off of the contention that social studies was about understanding “this is what happened, this is why it happened. Then maybe trying to project that into the future what we can do better” (interview, 6/16/17). Ernesto followed the same general path stating that social studies was important “for a student not just to learn from what mistakes we made in history but also to understand what we can do now in order to develop our future” (interview, 6/16/17). Influencing the future was a significant theme for Lizeth who saw social studies as a way “to try and get to that point of change” (interview, 6/22/17) and “to try and change something right now so that it can affect people differently in the future” (interview, 7/30/17). Beginning to place their temporal focus for social studies in the future lead preservice teachers to take a stand based on what they wanted social studies to do for the future. In blog postings, preservice teachers expanded this active notion of social studies into overt declarations of their political and ideological clarity.

Tori wrote about the importance of understanding that “there is no way a teacher can be neutral in their political stance” and that social studies therefore should “allow for subordinate groups to participate and be aware but also to step outside of the personal

into the sociopolitical” (blog posting, 6/7/17). Nora also described teaching as “a political action” and emphasized the need for social studies teachers to “speak out against injustice, both in and out of the classroom” (blog posting, 6/28/17). Ernesto included an example of this from his planning prior to teaching. After describing social studies teaching as “guiding our students rather than giving them . . . what to do” he wrote about his desire to have “students develop their own protest in my class. As their educator I will supervise and guide, but the students are responsible for choosing which issue they’d like to pursue and what form of protest is appropriate for it” (blog posting, 6/15/17). These responses show a clear articulation of a social studies purpose founded on social analysis that seeks to use classroom practice to achieve a nascent form of praxis, or action on the world to combat injustice. The same, unfortunately could not be said with regard to their articulation of the function of economics within social studies.

### **The Conspicuous Absence of Economics**

The purpose of economics was rarely described in terms of understanding either the past or fomenting active citizens ready to create a better future. There was only one mention of economics for this reason in interviews and several more in a professional development session. Later, some preservice teachers commented on the schism between their purpose for social studies and the function of economics within this purpose when specifically prompted to in interviews. Nora was the only preservice teacher to talk about the purpose of economics as having some utility for active citizenship, describing her purpose for economics as part of her main goal “to help students realize their full potential. Whether it’s strictly economic or whether it’s the type of participation they’re going to have as a member of society, whether just democratic or just . . . a human”

(interview, 6/16/17). This quote demonstrates the only response to a direct question about the purpose of economics that indicated a belief in the function of economics as a part of democratic citizenship, despite the a relatively extensive body of literature on the subject (c.f. Crowley & Swan, 2016; Schug & Wood, 2011; VanFossen, 2000; Vanfossen, 2005). Importantly, when given an article to read on the intersection of critical pedagogy and economics (Neumann, 2015), there were a range of responses that talked about the purpose of economics in terms of understanding the past, and as informing an active citizenship. In this setting, preservice teachers wrote that

Economics is political – it is wrong to say that exercising your rights as a citizen (or even your role as citizen) does not influence economics directly/indirectly. A well informed student (citizen) will be able to realize/influence economics within their community (PD1 artifact, 6/13/17).

This shows that when exposed to ideas about the juncture of economics and action, they began to consider the way that citizenship and economics might be linked, something that had not come up before. They also interpreted a quote about the importance of teaching wealth distribution by saying it is “important to teach students not just data and terms, but teach them in a way that they can understand wealth distribution in the real world. That will help them understand those problems and maybe even help solve them” (PD1 artifact, 6/13/17). This idea of economics as a way to inform action was continued in a response to another quote about Henry Giroux’s vision of critical pedagogy:

[i]n relation to economics, teaching students to be critical thinkers, be sympathetic, and intervene with major problems will help students better grasp econ as a subject. Critical of economic policy/procedure, sympathetic to economic issues, and activist to fix economic problems (PD1 artifact, 6/13/17)

When given the space and material to reflect on the potential for economics to perform a more critical function within their purposes for teaching social studies, the preservice

teachers were far more likely to conceptualize a discipline of economics that analyzed society with an intent to reshape it.

In order to address the emerging understanding that these preservice teachers were struggling to match their purpose for teaching social studies with economics, a professional development session was conducted to address this absence. The session, described in detail in Chapter 3 as the economic content session, was a manifestation of the need to address content knowledge in economics while simultaneously expanding the perceived utility of economics into the past and the present. By addressing the economic concepts of inflation and income we physically represented income inequality, racial wage gaps in the past, and racial wage gaps in the present with the goal of using economics to tangibly illustrate injustice and inform future action.

In interviews, preservice teachers reflected that this session helped them integrate unfamiliar content in ways that fit their ideal social studies practices which critically evaluated the past and informed active citizenship. Cristina described her struggle with economics by saying “I’m so insecure to teach [because] I really don’t have much knowledge,” however she immediately talked about “the activities you had us do with . . . the tape . . . Then we could teach our students the stuff that directly affects them . . . and how [economics] affected or was a product of the Delano Grape Strike and the economics behind it.” This activity helped her because that was “the way I learn and in the process I’m confident enough to say, ‘Okay I feel like I understand more things or vocabulary or the idea around this topic so I can go ahead and teach it to my students’” (interview, 7/13/17). So, not only was economic content presented in a way that was helpful, she saw

the content and the pedagogy as directly applicable and relevant for her students. For Lizeth, the session exposed her to new concepts that expanded her purpose for teaching economics. According to her:

I hadn't really thought about before this summer the effect of inflation on the present and how things keep increasing in price yet the minimum wage doesn't have that much of a difference over time. And how that affects so many people right now, so many people who are just struggling to get by. (interview, 7/30/17)

The specific content of income inequality, and the temporal connection of the past to the present kick started a new line of thinking for the preservice teachers, allowing them to use economics as a tool for *social analysis* in the past and connect that information to the present. This led to a positive experience in the classroom where "I did enjoy teaching them that lesson about inflation and minimum wage because I was learning it with them as well. Then some of my students were using it in their presentations of learning projects" (interview, 7/30/17). Tori also highlighted the session as expanding her perception of the function of economics. When asked how her purpose for teaching economics might have changed after some time in the classroom, she replied:

It's changed a little bit in the sense that thinking of what to do with money [but] it also could be like . . . looking at the rise and fall of incomes in neighborhoods. So instead of just the banking system, also money in general and how it affects populations. (interview, 7/20/17)

Upon follow up, this change was less a result of time in the classroom and more about "the PD review" (interview, 7/20/17). By directly weaving together new economic content with an expanded use of economics that fit their purpose, the professional development session held an outsized import in the expansion of these preservice teachers' understanding of the purpose of economics. It also allowed them to be more

comfortable with the content while understanding society along a timeline extending into the past and the future.

## **DISCUSSION**

This chapter explored the question of how content knowledge and previous experience with economics influenced the way that preservice teachers understand the function of economics within social studies education. This exploration utilized the theoretical lens of *social analysis* as part of a critical pedagogical practice and *counter-hegemonic stance* as part of a transformative purpose for teaching. The data reveal two significant themes. One, preservice teachers' purpose for teaching social studies and the function of economics were aligned in an analysis of society that occurred in the present as they described the need to be aware of social forces, to understand the way social forces operate, and to conceptualize justice. Two, preservice teachers' purposes for social studies extended beyond the function of economics into the past, and informed active citizenship for future action, yet economics did not function in this way. The exploration of these themes led to the emergence of three common findings. First, economics can be a significant part of a social studies education practice that seeks to analyze society, understand the past, and take action for a better future. Second, limited familiarity and content knowledge inhibit a broader application of the function of economics into an exploration of the past and as a component of active citizenship. Third, social studies teacher education must purposefully integrate economics content into the exploration of the past and discussion of citizenship and action for justice in order to combat prevailing

content knowledge issues in preservice teachers and to help them reconcile their purpose for teaching social studies through economics.

### **The Utility of Economics within a Transformative Social Studies Purpose**

John Smyth (2011) writes that “[a] truly critical pedagogy involves an examination of existing social relationships at three levels: that of history, of current practice (including its hierarchical bases and of the potential to transform arrangements in the future” (p. 21). The *social analysis* that teachers described as the purpose of social studies occurred on these three levels. However, when speaking about the function of economics within their purpose for teaching social studies they could only “expose these power-related dynamics that prop up the status quo, undermine social mobility, and produced discourses, and ideologies that justify such antidemocratic practices” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 100) in the present. Yet this indicates that for a critically-minded social studies educator, the inclusion of economics has a vital function as part of a *counter-hegemonic stance* informed by a political clarity that recognizes the “sociopolitical and economic realities that shape . . . lives and their capacity to transform such material and symbolic conditions” (Bartolomé, 2004, p. 98). Unfortunately, the discipline of economics provides limited support in extending economic analysis into the past (Bögenhold, 2010; Hake, 2009; John King, 2012), and rarely takes up social issues of race, class, and gender (Arestis, Charles, & Fontana, 2015; Keen, 2011; Nelson, 1993; Scaperlanda, 1999) that might be relevant to an active pursuit of justice as a citizen. Therefore, critically minded teachers, teacher educators, and preservice teachers should

consider the temporal connections between their purposes for teaching and the way that economics functions within those purposes as part of a transformation based system of teacher preparation (Blevins & Talbert, 2015).

### **Confronting the Content Knowledge Gap and its Impact on the Function of Economics**

Social studies teachers and preservice social studies teachers have too often received too little exposure to economics content prior to their teacher preparation program and eventual teaching experience (Aske, 2003; Ayers, 2015, 2016, Lynch, 1990, 1994). It should come as no surprise that this lack of familiarity can have a deleterious effect on student learning in economics (Bosshardt & Watts, 2005; Butters, Asarta, & Fischer, 2011). King and Finley (2015) describe the utility of Critical Race Theory in economics as *“the ability to understand and critique economic systems, recognize the inherent racism existent within the U.S. free market or capitalist economic system, and enact strategies that overcome obstacles presented by racist economic systems”* (emphasis in original, p. 203). This recognition of the potential of economics as *social analysis* tool as well as an important component of a *counter-hegemonic stance* with respect to race applies to other axes of oppression as well.

Economics can aid in a historical understandings of topics as diverse as gender inequality (Moorhouse, 2017), heterosexism in the labor market (Martell & Eschelbach Hansen, 2017), and the intersection of religion and wages (Gardella, 2015). It can also enable students to conceptualize active citizenship practices that seek to transform society (Kim, 2012; Shanks, 2017; Susman, 2009). In this study, the lack of content knowledge and previous experience with economics inhibited the potential for preservice teachers utilize an economic lens in accordance with their purpose for teaching social studies.



Their desire to analyze society in the past and present with the goal of utilizing active citizenship to transform the future was clearly stated, yet economics rarely broke the chronological bounds of the present as a factor in this purpose. Attending to the limited content knowledge that many preservice teachers demonstrate with respect to economics should consider this schism an opportunity to explicitly utilize economics to flesh out a critical social analysis of the past and as a vital component of active citizenship in the future.

### **Purposeful Integration as part of a Counter-Hegemonic Stance**

In order to enhance the content knowledge of preservice social studies teachers, efforts have been made to restructure teacher certification programs (Journell & Tolbert, 2015), to collaborate with faculty in other departments (Turchi, Hinde, Dorn, & Olp Ekiss, 2015), and, with respect to economics, to offer content-specific methods courses (Ayers, 2016; Joshi & Marri, 2006). These attempts to address the prevailing lack of content knowledge in economics are important to consider, but fundamental changes to teacher education practices may not always be feasible. Within the existing structures of social studies teacher education, it is important to consider ways to efficiently address limited content knowledge.

Teacher educators who intend to promote a humanizing social studies teacher education program that develops the “political and ideological clarity that will guide [preservice teachers] in denouncing discriminatory school and social conditions and practices” (Bartolomé, 2004, p. 119) must do so throughout their teacher education program (Blevins & Talbert, 2015). This includes a focus on the way preservice teachers

see the world and questions dominant assumptions (McLaren, 2015), the practices they implement in the classroom (Freire, 1993, 2005a), and the emphasis they put on praxis as the goal of seeing the world and humanizing classroom practices (De Lissovoy, 2008; Kincheloe, 2008). Therefore, social studies teacher educators must understand and support the transformative purpose of their preservice teachers, find economics content that fits with the content they will be teaching and model the implementation of critical pedagogy in methods courses. This multidimensional, integrated approach holds promise for improving content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge while supporting the development of a counter-hegemonic stance.

## CONCLUSION

[I]n the act of critical perception, men discover their own temporality. Transcending a single dimension, they reach back to yesterday, recognize today, and come upon tomorrow. The dimensionality of time is one of the fundamental discoveries in the history of human culture.

*Education for Critical Consciousness*, Paulo Freire

Preservice teachers in this study had very little prior exposure to economics, either in the dominant, neoclassical narrative, or a more critical version of economics. However, their conceptualization of the purpose of social studies focused on a critical use of social studies for *social analysis* in the past, present, and future through active citizenship. The function of economics within this budding emphasis on a *counter-hegemonic stance* was limited by the lack of familiarity with the discipline. Supporting preservice teachers' critical vision of social studies practice means emphasizing the efficacy of economics as part of a transformative purpose, including the ways that economics can help understand injustice in the past and promote a more just future. It

also means infusing economics in a purposeful way, with attention to modeling classroom practices while exposing preservice teachers to unfamiliar content. A counter-narrative in economics is possible, but only if preservice teachers can expand their understanding of economics within their transformative purpose and through their critical pedagogy.

## **CHAPTER 5: TEACHING IS ABOUT DOING, ECONOMICS IS ABOUT UNDERSTANDING: THE EXPANSIVENESS OF TEACHER PURPOSE AND THE LIMITATIONS OF ECONOMICS**

“Just think of the wild ways money is passed around on Earth!” he said. “You don’t have to go to the Planet Tralfamadore in Anti-Matter Galaxy 508G to find weird creatures with unbelievable powers. Look at the powers of an Earthling millionaire! Look at me! I was born naked, just like you, but my God, friends and neighbors, I have thousands of dollars a day to spend!” . . . He lost his balance for a moment, regained it, and then nearly fell asleep on his feet. He opened his eyes with great effort. “I leave it to you, friends and neighbors . . . think about the silly ways money gets passed around now, and then think up better ways”

*God Bless You Mr. Rosewater, Kurt Vonnegut*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Future social studies teachers embark on a path to teaching for a variety of reasons (Adler, 2008), and their purpose for teaching extends into the realms of ethics, morality, and philosophy (Dinkelman, 2009; Grant, 2003; Swan & Hicks, 2006). Teacher purpose should be “a practical, vital statement of the aims that direct the very real deliberation teachers engage in as they sort out questions of what is worth knowing and how best to teach it” (Dinkelman, 2009, p. 92). Included in this statement is a broad consideration of both curriculum and pedagogy as teacher purpose explores self-evaluation, relevance, priorities, contextual understandings, and personal considerations (Beck & Kosnik, 2014). Additionally, purpose deserves reflection consistently throughout teacher development (Dinkelman, 2000), including when preservice teachers graduate and move into the classroom (Hawley, 2010). The expansive conceptualization of purpose, both in terms of scope and temporality requires the foregrounding of purpose in both content and

pedagogy within teacher preparation (Hawley, 2012), and is especially vital to humanizing conceptions of social studies teacher preparation (Blevins & Talbert, 2015).

The common conception that the purpose of social studies is to promote democratic citizenship (Avery, 2004; Stanley, 2001, 2005) extends in some instances to the purpose of economics. Vanfossen (2005) outlines core economic content knowledge for citizenship, building off his previous work (2000) on teacher rationales for economics that includes “economic knowledge [that] is necessary for successful citizenship participation in our democratic society” (p. 404). Generally, literature on economics for citizenship has emphasized neoclassical economics (S. Miller, 1988; Schug & Walstad, 1991; Schug & Wood, 2011) with the associated expectation that citizens educated in this way will make the best decisions on the neoliberal policy prescriptions offered by the candidates and parties running for office.

Additional literature on the purpose of economics includes attention to the utility of economics to prepare students for extant social roles (Broome & Preston-Grimes, 2011; Marks & Davis, 2006; Moore, Sumrall, Mott, Mitchell, & Theobald, 2015) in the sense that they will “make informed consumer decisions . . . think carefully about careers . . . [and] participate in political discussions using benefit/cost analysis” (Charkins, 2013, p. 6). Some attention has been paid to a more critical evaluation of these roles, particularly in a critique of consumerism (Sandlin, Burdick, Norris, & Hoechsmann, 2012; Whitlock, 2015), financialization of the economy (Reifner & Schelhowe, 2010), and globalization (Gaudelli, 2013).

The final purpose for economics education centers on the necessity of economics to understand the past and present. Economics is interwoven into almost every element of modern life (Mitchell, 2010), and is also essential to historical perspectives on themes and events as varied as human slavery (Patterson, 2002; Zambelli, 2013), the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (Langelett & Schug, 2004), the Greco-Roman world and Imperial China (Ellington, 2011), and the Mexican border with the United States (Bigelow, 2006). The idea that economics education is vital to citizenship practices, preparation for extant or critical social roles, and for understanding the past and present resonates within a broad conceptualization of the purpose of teaching, and thus a given teacher or case may have a very different understanding of the function of economics based on their purpose for teaching.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

While the preservice teachers in this study articulated a purpose for teaching that was infused with the breadth of components described in the literature above, their understanding of the function of economics did not always align with their purpose for teaching. For these students, teaching was about *praxis*, or the conceptual unity of word and work; action and reflection (Freire, 1993). Their purpose for teaching included elements of *social analysis*, as well as humanizing forms of *classroom practice* yet went beyond these tenets of critical pedagogy by including action to transform the social context they observed via *praxis* (De Lissovoy, 2008). They explicitly sought social change, and the unity of theory and practice (Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 2015). The way

that these preservice teachers understood the function of economics stopped short of this, however, often remaining in the realm of *social analysis*, and rarely extending into the *classroom practice* and *praxis* indicated as part of their purpose for teaching.

Vital to understanding the disjuncture between the preservice teachers' purpose for teaching and for teaching economics is a consideration of experiential knowledge that teachers carry with them (c.f. Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Elbaz, 1983; Shulman, 1986), specifically the *practical theories* that these teachers brought to the table. Zeichner & Liston (2013) describe these *practical theories* as the “intermingling of personal experiences, transmitted knowledge, and core values” (p. 26) about teaching. These personal experiences come from “the variety of life experiences, including educational experiences that can potentially inform . . . work in the present” (Zeichner & Liston, 2013, p. 27). Transmitted knowledge involves the theory and second-hand knowledge that teachers have which may come from texts, research, interpersonal communication, or social contexts (Handel & Lauvas, 1987). Finally, core values are composed of ethical, philosophical, and political dispositions that may or may not be directly related to education (Handel & Lauvas, 1987), and have the effect of “structuring our practical theories because we interpret everything through the lens provided by them” (Zeichner & Liston, 2013, p. 33).

### **Research Question and Findings Summary**

This chapter is framed around the research question that asks how preservice teachers describe their purpose for teaching, and how that impacts their understanding of the

function of economics. The data revealed two significant themes. One, the preservice teachers in this study described a purpose for teaching that was about action. They forcefully believed that teaching was not only about exposing social injustices, but also about allowing students to have the voice necessary to transform those injustices. Importantly, many of the preservice teachers indicated that their own experiences within these unjust systems motivated them to transform the structures that were discriminatory to them and their students. Two, preservice teachers described a function of economics that exposed social injustices, but did not see economics as having the capacity to give voice to their students, to transform unjust structures, or to allow them to give back beyond some social meliorism.

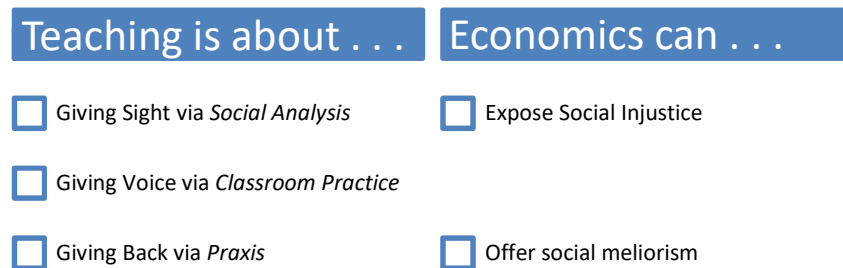


Figure 5: The Function of Economics as Part of Teacher Purpose

These themes speak to three important findings from the data. First, appreciative stances toward economic content knowledge that preservice teachers bring to the table might mollify concerns that content knowledge deficiencies prohibit teachers from exploring their purpose for teaching within the functions of economics. Second, neoclassical economics enforces an educational environment devoid of the *classroom*



*practice and praxis* preservice teachers described, requiring an explicit critique of the disciplinary boundaries as preservice teachers explore the way their purpose for teaching fits in economics. Third, given the emphasis on giving back through social meliorism, preservice teachers might benefit from exploring transformative financial arrangements as a way to unite their *praxis*-oriented purpose for teaching with giving back through economics.

## **TEACHING IS ABOUT DOING, ECONOMICS IS ABOUT UNDERSTANDING**

### **The Purpose of Teaching**

Social studies preservice teachers in this study had detailed and elaborate conceptions of the purpose for teaching that included the idea that teaching was intended to foster *social analysis*, that it would alter *classroom practice* to respond to marginalized students, and that it should lead to *praxis* as teachers and students pursue “action and reflection upon the world in order to change it” (hooks, 1994, p. 14). Importantly, they collectively understood teaching was a way to give sight, or analyze the world (Magill & Rodriguez, 2014); give voice, or allow students the opportunity to name the world (Freire, 1993, 2005b); and give back, as they could co-construct knowledge (Giroux, 2010) with students whose backgrounds were similar to theirs. These elements of the purpose of teaching were evident in interviews and professional development sessions, and were also present in preservice-teacher generated class artifacts and blogs.

### *Teaching is About Giving Sight*

Teaching for these preservice teachers was about doing, and that action was predicated on *social analysis* designed to give sight, or interrogate unjust structures in the form of “critical awareness of those obstacles and their *raison d’être*” (Freire, 2000, p. 55). In this study, these interrogations involved a general questioning of why society is the way it is, questioning the structure of white privilege, and questioning deficit perspectives surrounding urban schools. Tori began her explanation of why she wanted to be a teacher by saying, “it’s more I want to know all about the system, the situations and how to handle them and I guess to be more specific, it’s not just education by more current situations that we encounter” (interview, 6/16/17). Nora elaborated on this systemic analysis in a blog posting, saying she wanted to be:

that teacher . . . that challenges their students to question the things around them, to question everything. I want my students to look at their lives, their neighborhoods, schools, city, state, country and beyond and ask, “why is this happening?” when they recognize a social issues or something they would like to change. Even within the loose confines of [Discovery], I want to foster their curiosity, their healthy suspicion of “the way things are” (7/14/17).

Lizeth echoed this desire, quoting James Baldwin’s (1963/2008) *A Talk to Teachers* and writing that “I really enjoyed the quote that said that the purpose of education is ‘to ask questions of the universe, and then learn to live with those questions’. I can relate so much to this quote” (blog posting, 7/14/17). These elements of *social analysis* that began by questioning systems in general were further developed as preservice teachers articulated a purpose for teaching that included questioning systems of white privilege and urban schools.

White and non-white preservice teachers reflected on the need for teachers and their students to expose the role of white privilege in the education system. Jonny, expressed the need for teachers to consider that “White Privilege allows white people to be ignorant or oblivious to the impact of race” and therefore, as a white teacher, she should use her “privilege to be a resource for social justice” by exploring “the amount of resources, funds, freedom, etc.” (blog posting, 8/8/17) in schools based on racial circumstances. Ernesto, a Latino preservice teacher, echoed this elucidation of the purpose of teaching by explaining that “it is important for white individuals to reflect on the privilege they receive in their educational process because of a system that’s built for them” (blog posting, 8/8/17). Nora, a white preservice teacher, detailed this aspect of teacher purpose for giving sight at length by writing:

Awareness is everything in being a teacher of social justice, and how am I supposed to fight against the school to prison pipeline, or racial micro-aggressions within my own classroom if I don’t even know they exist? Having the conversation though, and asking the difficult questions though are good ways to start. It might be uncomfortable to recognize my own privilege—to see that it was privilege to go to schools without police, to have parents who both went to college, and to come to college myself—however, that recognition makes all the difference (blog posting, 8/9/17)

While this explanation of the importance of recognizing privilege dealt more with her personal privilege, it served as an opening to consider the ramifications for students, and her desire to not be like “[t]eachers who use methods of humiliation to control their classroom [and] are more like prison guards than they are instructors. For me, this is so significant, as I did not choose education because I wanted to be a prison guard” (blog posting, 8/9/17). These various articulations of the need for teachers to consider the role of racial privilege as a systemic issue (Love, 2013) set the stage for their description of

the purpose of teaching as a way to give sight to the racial and socioeconomic realities of urban school systems (Kozol, 2005).

A final component of giving sight as an element of teacher purpose was the exposition of the framing and reality of urban schools. Ernesto, when asked why he chose this particular teaching program, explained that “we talked about the first day of classes that people can have a negative perspective on urban schools and of anything that has to do with urban” (interview, 6/16/17), and that he wanted to teach in a way that brought out the “level of creativity, acceptance of struggle, and empathy that can be found within the urban environment” (interview, 6/16/17). This connected with Lizeth’s purpose for teaching in urban areas, where she was drawn to the urban teaching program because “they focused a lot not just on the places where a person was teaching, but also on the types of things they discuss in class that are focused around trying to help students and communities that are different sorts of ways disadvantaged” (interview, 6/22/17). Cristina described an aspect of the purpose of teaching by writing that “it is important to allow the students to become active with issues in their community, and realize how their own community may be set up for failure” (blog posting, 6/22/17). These explorations of prevalent deficit perspectives of urban education and systemic injustice described by these preservice teachers, were flipped on their head in a fascinating way by Nora, who described her own privileged educational background as deficient, saying “I think that way, even now just like taking this class, the way we are approaching things, is very different than the way I was taught. I’ve been recognizing deficit in my own learning and just my own experiences. I think that as a teacher, I want to be better than the teachers I had” (interview, 6/16/17). Following up on this, she revealed that her purpose for teaching was to spend time in schools with more “diversity where there’s more open-

mindfulness to different perspectives and experiences” (interview, 6/16/17) and to explore those assets with students. Exploring and exposing the conditions of urban schooling, as part of a broader purpose for teaching that gave sight to the world around the schools they worked in was a significant component of teaching for *social analysis* (Freire, 2000), and combined with their efforts to give voice to students and to give back to their communities allowed them to pursue a purpose for teaching rooted in *praxis*.

### ***Teaching is About Giving Voice***

A purpose for teaching that centers on doing included many references to giving voice to students. In blogs and artifacts, preservice teachers elaborated on the way in which their purpose for teaching would give voice to students, and actively allow them to speak back to the systems that they saw, with the idea that their voice would serve as a catalyst for change. Notably, their purpose for teaching included specific references to giving students a voice as well as references to elements of student voice that speak to the inherent worth of students, their linguistic preferences (Zuidema, 2005), and valuing their experiences outside of school (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Skerrett & Bomer, 2011). When asked to write their purpose for teaching on the board during a class session, preservice teachers explicitly wrote, “[t]o give a voice to students” (class artifact, 11/8/17). Additionally, their written comments where they expressed the desire to “be a student advocate” and “to be an advocate” (class artifact, 11/8/17) were expressions of the need to amplify student voice, to help them succeed in ways that would improve their social condition (class observation, 11/8/17). This tied into a description that Nora gave for her purpose in the context of dialogic teaching, where she wrote that:

In the context of urban education as it pertains to democratic participation, dialogic teaching allows students who identify with historically marginalized groups to express themselves, and claim a voice. If we continue to consider whose voices are consistently absent from historical narratives, giving students the space to remedy the silence forced on those who came before them in their communities is almost revolutionary (blog posting, 6/15/17). These expressions of advocacy, amplification, and remedies for absences as part of a purpose for teaching that enhanced student voice were further elaborated on as preservice teachers talked about valuing students' linguistic expression, experiences, and inherent value.

Voice was also important to these preservice teachers' purpose for teaching because they felt that when students were able to speak their truth and bring their culture into the classroom, students would be valued as part of the curriculum. As Tori put it when discussing her purpose for teaching in a culturally responsive way, "it lets the student know it is important that their culture is being brought up so as to say 'hey, we didn't forget about you marginalized people'" (blog posting, 8/9/17). Ernesto similarly talked about his purpose by writing, "[t]hrough pedagogy or social justice I know that a teacher from this program would've convinced me of my worth. That's what I'm going to do for my students and I'm excited for the future" (blog posting, 8/11/17). This element of value as underlying student voice was included in a brainstorm on teacher purpose where preservice teachers wrote that they wanted to teach in order to "inspire students to reach their already existing potential" (class artifact, 11/8/17).

This underlying value as a component of student voice was fleshed out in discussions on student backgrounds and the need for those backgrounds to be included in their pedagogy. Linguistic background was one element of this, as Nora wrote:

It is not fair that students whose language is anything other than Standard English, are forced to speak in the dialect which presumes to be “standard” in the first place . . . if we are trying to be social justice teachers, if we are trying to create a culture of education that is not marked by oppression and policing, then we too have to recognize and overcome the implications of “standard” English, ourselves (blog posting, 8/9/17).

Beyond language background, Cristina wrote that “it is important to show students the importance as to the different points of view, and how their experiences contribute to the different viewpoints. This way, students can find power in themselves, as well as teachers get further involved in social justice teaching” (blog posting, 8/9/17). This was similar to Jonny’s conviction that “As a future social justice teacher, I think empathy has become the largest theme of teaching. Empathy, meaning understanding where your students are coming from, being flexible for their benefit, and using their experiences as resources (or funds of knowledge) in the classroom” (blog posting, 8/9/17). These expressions of teaching for social justice in a way that builds off of student linguistic and cultural assets (Yosso, 2005) to enhance student voice in the classroom demonstrate that for these preservice teachers, teaching was about doing more than just *social analysis*, it was about a *classroom practice* that equalized power dynamics and spoke back to oppressive dominant narratives by foregrounding students’ lives.

### ***Teaching is About Giving Back***

Giving back as part of a purpose for teaching was where *social analysis* and *classroom practice* met to address the goal of teaching for *praxis*, where teachers and students “work and transform the world” through “action and reflection . . . By acting they transform; by transforming they create a reality which conditions their manner of

acting” (Freire, 2005a, pp. 93–94). In terms of teaching purpose, preservice teachers in this study elaborated on the need to transform society through their work in interviews, blogs, and class artifacts. Some descriptors of this were superficial, describing their purpose for teaching as a way to “give back to my community” (class artifact, 11/8/17), to “be able to have a similar impact on a student that I wish somebody could have had on me” (class artifact, 11/8/17), or to address the fact that “[m]ost of my friends’ parents are right there under the poverty line . . . so I wanted to help those type of kids. Kids like me” (Lizeth, interview, 6/22/17). But often these purposes went further, illuminating a purpose for teaching grounded in the realization “that there were a lot of unjust things and I want to fix that” (Cristina, interview, 6/10/17). The fix, in this case, was more than just helping students succeed within the system as it is. Giving back for these preservice teachers meant that after seeing unjust structures (Freire, 2000), and giving voice to marginalized students (Moll et al., 1992; Skerrett & Bomer, 2011; Zuidema, 2005), teaching called for “interven[ing] in reality in order to change it” (Freire, 2005a, p. 4), or giving back through systemic change. Vital to this notion is the conception of hope and optimism in the face of unjust social structures. Duncan-Andrade (2009) describes this critical hope as rejecting despair and committing to a struggle against inequality. By recognizing society as “something unfinished, not as something inexorably given; it has become a challenge rather than a hopeless limitation” (Freire, 2005a, p. 10). Giving back, for these preservice teachers, represented a critical optimism that transformation could occur even in the face of severe oppression.



Ernesto explicitly referenced systemic injustice when describing his anti-racist purpose for teaching, writing, “Disapproving of the systems is not enough to change these systems though, and it’s important to redesign social systems [as a] means to acknowledge their colossal unseen dimensions.” (blog posting, 8/8/17). Jonny also described the need to transform the school system’s entrenched racism (Leonardo, 2015) writing, “I am super interested in how we, as educators and social justice workers, can break down these systemic race issues in our public schools” (blog posting, 8/11/17). Lizeth’s extended reflection on her purpose for teaching built on Duncan-Andrade’s (2009) typology of hope to express what giving back meant to her in terms of her purpose for teaching:

I grew up constantly hearing “La esperanza es lo ultimo que muere” (hope is the last thing that dies.) I consider myself to be a very optimistic person and hope is very important to me, but as I grow older, I have started to relate more to “hope breathes eternal misery.” I try my best not to, but sometimes the pessimistic thoughts just win. . . . As an optimistic person, I do feel like I will struggle to not present my students with hokey hope, mythical hope, and hope deferred. I know I had it “easy” growing up around people that looked like me and understood me, but I still would like to think of myself as a “rose that grows from concrete,” and use my experience with overcoming numerous obstacles in and out of the Valley<sup>5</sup> and my understanding of systemic racism as a way to provide critical hope to my students (blog posting, 8/9/17).

Giving back, as part of a purpose for teaching, was more than simply the use of one’s earned social capital to help the less fortunate, though there was an element of that. The critical hope (Duncan-Andrade, 2009) and optimism (Freire, 2005a) represented by these responses indicated that giving back was about *praxis*, the collaborative reflection and

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<sup>5</sup> Referring to the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas

action necessary to transform entrenched and hegemonic forces on a path to a more just society (Freire, 1993).

Elements of critical pedagogy abounded in the way that these preservice teachers described their purpose for teaching. They desired to teach in order to give sight, or allow their students the tools for *social analysis*. They also wanted to teach in a way that gave voice to students, implementing a *classroom practice* that spoke to the marginalization of certain students in the curriculum and the opportunity to demonstrate the worth of their diverse experiences. Finally, they anticipated teaching in a way that gave back, by fostering *praxis* as a revolutionary transformation of the social system. Teaching, for these preservice teachers, was about doing. They constructed a purpose for teaching that was active in giving sight, giving voice, and giving back. Their purpose for teaching economics, however, would only include one of these elements of their purpose for teaching, leading to a purpose for economics that was simply about understanding, or giving sight, and failing to give voice or to give back.

### **The Purpose of Economics**

As discussed in the previous section, preservice teachers in this study conceptualized the purpose of teaching as fulfilling a number of tenets of critical pedagogy, including *social analysis*, *classroom practice*, and *praxis*. However, in interviews, professional development sessions, and class artifacts; it became clear that their description of the function of economics only extended into the realm of *social analysis*, or the idea that economics was about understanding the world. Following up on

this apparent misalignment revealed that content knowledge (Shulman, 2004) and inexperience with economics were barriers to an understanding of the function of economics (Grossman, 2002) that aligned with their purpose for teaching in a more holistic manner.

### ***Economics is About Giving Sight***

For these preservice teachers, economics was important because it allowed students to understand the world. This included attention both to understanding economic systems and the way they operate with respect to students' lives, and attention to injustice and inequality. In a class session, preservice teachers brainstormed their purpose for teaching economics immediately after discussing their purpose for teaching. The results of that brainstorm included the idea that economics was designed "to educate on economic systems" (emphasis in original, class artifact, 11/8/17). This broad understanding was included in interviews as well, in ways that were superficially neutral, but set the stage for a more critical analysis. For Nora, economics "ties into understanding of how society works, I think economics is fundamental part of that" (interview, 6/16/17). These systems also had an impact on students' lives, as Ernesto explained when discussing the importance of economics as a way to understand the "influence on the socio-economic statuses and issues that some people might go through" (interview, 7/21/17). Likewise, Jonny felt that economics was a way to touch on "classes and what it means to be in a certain class and the implications that has in social life" (interview, 7/11/17). Central to the idea that economics could function as a way to see the

world was the idea that economics was about systemic analysis and the way that those systems impacted students' lives. Further exploration of economics as giving sight revealed that economics for *social analysis* extended into the realm of justice and equality.

The class brainstorm also revealed that economics was about exploring injustice, as responses described a purpose for teaching economics “to show inequality”, “to understand underlying mechanisms which perpetuate social inequality”, and to “show inequality between communities/classes” (class artifact, 11/8/17). These responses were also tied to students' lives, as Ernesto wrote: “It’s important to help students realize systemic issues determine their conditions rather than it being their fault” (class observation, 11/8/17). This coincided with responses in interviews such as Lizeth, who saw economics as a way to explore “a lot of economic disadvantage topics in there, like maybe even some types of urban development issues that are better taught through economics” (interview, 6/22/17), an idea that was echoed by Ernesto who described a vision of economics as showing how the economy “has an impact on certain communities in comparison to others and how those impacts can vary . . . with issues of privilege and disenfranchisement” (interview, 6/16/17). Utilizing economics to illuminate inequality and give sight to injustice showed that economics was about understanding society. In keeping with a major component of their expressed purpose for teaching, Cristina described how her purpose for teaching connected to economics:

I feel [my purpose] links up very well with giving back to my community and to show inequality because I feel like some neighborhoods in Houston, they are kind

of being segregated, and with the whole red-lining and that portion of economics can tie in with how my community is what it is (class observation, 11/8/17). Documenting inequality, segregation, and discriminatory housing policies were manifestations of economics that conformed to her purpose for teaching. These elements of economics that allowed teachers and students to address unjust circumstances directly related to students' lives were where the preservice teachers' purpose for teaching and the function of economics were in the greatest alignment. Other elements of their purpose for teaching, however, did not share this relationship.

***Giving Up: Limited Student Voice and the Absence of Praxis when Giving Back***

In contrast to the way in which these preservice teachers aligned their purpose for teaching with the function of economics as a way to give sight to students as a form of *social analysis*, there was a noticeable absence in their articulation of the function of economics as a way to give voice to students, or the idea that economics could serve as a way to demonstrate students' worth, to value their unique culture, or foreground their experiences and lived reality. Additionally, while preservice teachers indicated that economics could function as a way to give back to their communities, ostensibly in line with their purpose for teaching, the methods by which they described giving were more about success within the current system than the transformational *praxis* that undergirded their purpose for teaching.

Preservice teachers were aware that their conceptualization of the function of economics did not fit with their justice-oriented *classroom practice* that foregrounded student voice. When asked why, Jonny responded, "I don't think I'm educated enough on

economics to understand what my purpose for teaching it would be, and also I don't know how to be social justice oriented in economics" (class observation, 11/8/17).

Cristina also referred to her discomfort with the subject as a barrier to fulfilling her purpose for teaching within economics, saying, "I'm awful at Economics. I don't understand many of the concepts myself, so it's really hard for me to actually teach it.

How can I teach something I'm unsure of?" (interview, 7/13/17). In a methods class section, after reading an article that promoted a more humanizing approach to economics (Shanks, 2017), Ernesto described how his background in economics inhibited his ability to consider a function of economics that fit his purpose saying:

I remember my economics class was just straight up, graphs, graphs, graphs. And I hated it, because I felt like it was just another math class. So there was never that social studies element to it. It was just felt like here's another math class. I kind of liked how [the author said] you need to recognize student voices, identify economic themes, and allow students to transform society based on those things that they learned (class observation, 11/8/17).

Both Jonny and Ernesto reflected after this class session about their burgeoning understanding of a critical purpose for economics, writing:

Economics is probably the subject I am least excited to teach about but [the] activity of connecting why we think it's important to generally teach and why we think it's important to teach economics really got me thinking about its importance. Being able to make those connections also allowed me to understand how economics can still serve to be a social justice oriented subject (Ernesto, class artifact, 11/14/17).

The class activities helped alleviate some of the discomfort associated with unfamiliarity with economic content, as Jonny wrote, "I really loved all of the hands-on activities in class, they made me feel more capable of understanding a topic that seems so complex to me" (class artifact, 11/15/17). The limited economic familiarity, self-perception of economic shortcomings, and rote experiences within previous economics classes all

contributed to the inability of these preservice teachers to see a function of economics that would give voice to their students or in any way alter their *classroom practice* to respect their students' worth or experiences, however, some moderate attention to a version of economics that addressed their purposes for teaching lead to some increased comfort with the subject within their broader purpose for teaching.

Descriptions of the function of economics seemed to align with preservice teachers' purpose for teaching in a way that gave back, a component of teaching purpose that represented *praxis*, or the marriage of action and reflection to transform oppressive systems. However, data analysis of class artifacts, observations, and interviews revealed that their descriptors of giving back through the discipline of economics actually referred to helping marginalized students succeed within oppressive systems rather than transform them in keeping with their purpose for teaching. In this sense, they understood economics through a semi-intransitive critical consciousness, where "interests center almost totally around survival, and they lack a sense of life on a more historic plane" (Freire, 2005a, p. 13).

When preservice teachers were asked to connect their purpose for teaching to the function of the discipline of economics, several of the responses about the function of economics were linked to purposes for teaching like "give back to my community," "to be able to have an impact on our collective futures" (class artifact, 11/8/17), and to inspire students from their hometowns. However, these purposes for teaching aligned with understandings of the function of economics such as "have students be financially educated," "to equip students to succeed," and "to be able to make sound financial

decisions” (class artifact, 11/8/17). These connections reveal a limited vision for the function of economics within a desire to use teaching to alter social systems. Follow up questions confirmed this limitation. Jonny talked about economics as “a way to be a support and give back to your community” (class observation, 11/8/17), but both she and Lizeth saw economics as a way to show marginalized people that while “very few people there have college degrees or money to pay for college [they] could show them that why can’t you when other people can?” (class observation, 11/8/17). This bootstrap approach to giving back is far from the expressed purpose for teaching that addressed systemic racism as explored earlier.

Tori also saw economics as connected to her purpose for teaching, which was to provide “hope” (class artifact, 11/8/17) to schools and students she was familiar with (class observation, 11/8/17), yet her understanding of the function of economics broke down to questions about the boundaries of the discipline, saying:

I don’t really know what all economics is. Is it just money? Cause if so, can’t we just have a banker teach all that? And, are we teaching them the economics that they would actually encounter, are we going to teach about credit cards? Are we going to teach them to get out of debt? . . . In the sense of like bettering your own economics [situation] yeah, but I’m confused” (class observation, 11/8/17)

Nowhere in this conceptualization of the function of economics is a critical ‘hope’ for ‘familiar’ communities. Rather, there is a cynicism embodied by cyclical debt and the authority of financial professionals. Interview data affirmed the widespread understanding of bettering students’ lives through personal financial education as opposed to *praxis*. Initial descriptions about the purpose of economics included doing “something that can influence [students] into their own careers. Like being investors, being accountants, to being business people” (Cristina, interview, 6/10/17);



understanding “like, this is a check, this is what happens when you withdraw money and this is how your money has taxes like everyone else’s money” (Tori, interview, 6/16/17); or fondly remembering a teacher who “applied it to like, ‘hey, this is how you should probably do your taxes when you’re older.’ And made it more relevant to us. And so learning how to . . . be fiscally responsible.” (Jonny, interview 6/14/17). These emphases on economics to enhance personal financial literacy in a very narrow way are a far cry from a commitment to teaching that seeks to transform unjust social structures. In fact, they appear to uphold a vision of teaching that transmits a vision of achievement through wealth accumulation and sound financial decisions rather than one that actively co-constructs a new social order with students.

## DISCUSSION

This chapter investigated the question of the way preservice teachers described their purpose for teaching and the way that shaped their understanding of the function of economics. The investigation utilized a theoretical frame that intersected preservice teachers’ *practical theories* with components of critical pedagogy including *social analysis*, *classroom practice*, and *praxis*. The resultant data revealed two main themes. First, preservice teachers’ *practical theories* regarding their purpose for teaching included all three elements of critical pedagogy in the way they sought to give sight, voice, and to give back to students in transformative ways. Second, preservice teachers’ purpose for teaching extended into the function of economics in a limited way, only including *social analysis*, and precluding any *practical theories* that might have gave voice to students by challenging classroom practices, or giving back in a way that addressed unjust social structures. These two themes contribute to three findings. One, the specter of unfamiliar

content and limited formal economic experiences reared its head again as a barrier to conceptualizing the function of economics as fulfilling these preservice teachers' purpose for teaching, yet a broader understanding of what economics is might ameliorate this disjuncture and allow for greater fidelity of purpose to economic functionality. Two, the conventions of neoclassical economics as a dominant narrative in economics impede the ability to apply a critical purpose that includes a transformative *classroom practice* to economics. Three, *praxis* was a significant component of preservice teachers' purpose for teaching and yet giving back in the context of economics fit into existing social arrangements, indicating that exposure to transformative projects within economics curriculum might aid in the alignment of teacher purpose and economic function.

### **Informing Critical Purpose via Appreciative Stances toward Economic Content Knowledge**

The previous chapter explored the way in which preservice students in this study conformed to a well-established finding in the literature, that of limited economic content knowledge among social studies teachers (Aske, 2000; Ayers, 2015, 2016, 2017; Bosshardt & Watts, 2005; Butters, Asarta, & Fischer, 2011; Walstad, 2001), and this limitation had a negative effect on the way the alignment of preservice teachers' conceptualization of the purpose of social studies and the purpose of economics. Data in this chapter reveal a similar misalignment due to limited content knowledge, yet rather than emphasize this limitation as a deficit, it may be more efficacious to consider the content knowledge that preservice teachers *do* have, whether they realize it or not, as a

path to an appreciative stance toward economic content knowledge and a fuller integration of teacher purpose and the function of economics.

In particular, preservice teachers who describe a purpose for teaching that includes *classroom practices* designed to enhance student voice by attending to their worth, experiences, and strengths deserve exposure to economics content that does the same. Lutz and Lux (1988), in outlining a more humanizing economics promote “a more complete image of the person” (p. 18) in economics that goes beyond the emphasis of neoclassical economics on self-interest and math, into the realm of mutual-interest and psychology. An asset-oriented approach to economics that fulfills a purpose for teaching centered on the critical pedagogical tenet of *classroom practice* could explore the unique ways that desire, community, truth and justice have motivated their choices up to this point. This moral dimension of economics (Etzioni, 1988) may allow preservice teachers to broaden their *practical theories* beyond the mathematical and reductive experiences they described in this study.

Likewise, preservice teachers may better conceptualize a function of economics in keeping with their purpose through an appreciative stance toward their experiences and shared values. As Nelson (2010) writes, “[m]ainstream economics really had nothing to say of any intelligence about the economic relations characterizing the life I had led at home . . . Human connections, human needs, and the appropriate ethical responses . . . were left to other fields” (p. 27). If teacher educators begin with an assumption that preservice teachers and their future students have lived lives full of economic relationships, choices, and values, they can use these experiences as the basis for course

curriculum, rather than bemoan the limited content knowledge that conforms to the neoclassical paradigm.

Finally, given that the overwhelming population of teachers, in this study and nationally, are female (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016), they may be uniquely positioned to attend to elements of feminist economics in their classroom practice based on their experiences in a patriarchal society. Feminist economics explores the “exclusion of women from traditionally male activities and institutions” (England, 2003, p. 35) as well as the “devaluation of and low material rewards accorded to activities and traits that traditionally have been deemed appropriate for women” (England, 2003, p. 36). While feminist economic theory is of value to all economists as part of a more pluralist approach to the discipline (Himmelweit, 2017), the uniquely oppressive experiences that women have in a patriarchal society may enhance preservice teachers’ ability to analyze injustice in the economy. There may be no better crucible for the *practical theories* that inform these perspectives than the school system writ large, and teacher educators would do well to build on this critique as they marry teacher purpose and the function of economics.

### **Explicit Critique of Neoclassical Values as Classroom Practice**

If preservice teachers’ *practical theories* (Handel & Lauvas, 1987) about the purpose of teaching include elements of critical pedagogy including reframing *classroom practice* (Freire, 1993), and working toward *praxis* as an end goal of education (hooks, 1994), what causes their experiences with and descriptions of the function of economics

to fail to align with these ideas? Critiques of the neoclassical paradigm within economics explain that this disjuncture is not only common, it is fundamental to a discipline so entrenched in neoclassical theory, The overwhelming adherence to neoclassical economics in contemporary standards (MacDonald & Siegfried, 2012; National Council for Economic Education, 2010; Walstad & Watts, 2015), textbooks (Leet & Lopus, 2003, 2007), and classroom practices (Khayum, Valentine, & Friesner, 2006) means that neoclassical economics functions as a dominant narrative within the discipline. Therefore preservice teachers and teacher educators should consider the disciplinary boundaries of such an entrenched perspective, particularly with regard to its manifestation in *classroom practice*, and potential to inform *praxis*. This critique will demonstrate that neoclassical economics, by design, will not fulfill preservice teachers' critical purpose for teaching.

A *classroom practice* that values the unique backgrounds, culture, and voice of students is inherently in contrast to neoclassical economics' insistence on homo economicus, or economic man, as a mechanistic maximizer of self-interest (Graupe, 2012; R. Miller, 1993). Under the neoclassical paradigm, every human is an atomistic individual (Remmele, 2010) and divorced from cultural elements such as race, class, or gender (Arestis, Charles, & Fontana, 2015; Keen, 2011). In the broader landscape of economics education, this whitewashing of student voice occurs through neoclassical hegemony within the curriculum (Bartlett & Ferber, 1997; Bartlett, Ferber, & Green, 2009; Feiner, 1993), as well as behaviorist approaches to teaching practices (Jensen & Owen, 2001; G. Miller, 2012; Peart & Levy, 2005) that dehumanize students (Freire, 1993; Scheurman, 1998), particularly those outside the mythical norm. If critical

pedagogy “asks how and why knowledge gets constructed the way it does, and how and why some constructions of reality are legitimated and celebrated by the dominant culture while others clearly are not” (McLaren, 2015, p. 133), preservice teachers with a critical purpose should ask these questions of every discipline in social studies. An explicit critique of the overt and covert ways in which neoclassical economics systematically excludes student voice in economics might show dehumanization of certain students and the legitimation of neoclassical knowledge in action. It might also provide the impetus for preservice teachers to seek out alternative economic paradigms (c.f. Fischer et al., 2017) which might more closely attend to their critical purpose for teaching.

### **Giving Back through Transformative Financial Arrangements**

The asynchronous relationship between giving back as a form of *praxis* with respect to preservice teachers’ purpose and giving back as a form of enhancing personal wealth with respect to the function of economics deserves to be interrogated on epistemic grounds. While preservice teachers in this study saw endemic social structures such as racism as potentially mutable if their transformative purpose was achieved, their view of the economic system was decidedly more static, and thus the transformative potential of the discipline of economics was much more limited. This is not unexpected when it comes to the economy, as there is a widely-held belief “that money, profits, markets, and corporations are parts of an ‘economic machine’ [which] operates in an automatic fashion, following inexorable and amoral ‘laws’” (Nelson, 2010, p. 1). Therefore, collective policies can be determined on the basis of these ‘laws’ at the expense of

democracy (Earle, Moran, & Ward-Perkins, 2016), effectively limiting individual agency to achievement within the existing system (Carr, 2012). This inhibition via the disciplinary boundaries of the neoclassical paradigm in economics is a significant barrier to a critical purpose for teaching. It represents the difference between what Freire (2005a) terms adaptation and integration, where:

[i]ntegration results from the capacity to adapt oneself to reality *plus* the critical capacity to make choices and to transform that reality. To the extent that man loses his ability to make choices . . . , to the extent that his decisions are no longer his own because they result from external prescriptions, he is no longer integrated. Rather he has adapted (p. 4).

Preservice teachers may seek to be integrated, to achieve *praxis*, as part of their purpose for teaching, but they may have no conceptualization of economics as anything other than adaptation to the status quo. As Freire (2005a) further writes “the adaptive person is person as *object*, adaptation representing at most a weak form of self-defense” (p. 4). Therefore, for preservice teachers to be critical agents of transformation, they must apprehend the limitations of neoclassical economics as they relate to their purpose for teaching and teaching economics.

If preservice teachers are attuned to the way that their ideals of giving back through economics conform to these conventions, teacher educators and preservice teachers can build on their extant concerns about financial status by giving back in an integrative way, or a way that challenges systemic norms and alters unjust social arrangements. This can begin to be addressed by following Lucey’s (2012) call for a “justice-oriented approach to financial morality [that] analyzes the social flaws that cause the problem and strives for systemic change” (p. 53). This particular ideal, that financial

education should contain a moral dimension and should act on those morals (Lucey, Agnello, & Laney, 2016), makes sense as a response to an interpretation of the function of economics as a way to give back through financial empowerment. Rather than emphasizing individual achievement, preservice teachers can conceptualize economics as offering financial tools that speak to the unique needs of marginalized people along a variety of axes of oppression (Lucey & Laney, 2012). Alternative forms of financial arrangements that could be explored include community land trusts (Nembhard, 2008), co-operative forms of business ownership (Nembhard, 2010), social entrepreneurship (Whitlock, 2017), and community based self-help organizations (Height, 1994). These alternatives, many of which are rooted in traditional forms of community organization for marginalized people, offer the opportunity for preservice teachers to give back through economics in a way that is closer to the *praxis* they described as part of their purpose for teaching.

## CONCLUSION

We began with the conviction that the role of man was not only to be in the world, but to engage in relations with the world – that through acts of creation and re-creation, man makes cultural reality and thereby adds to the natural world, which he did not make.

*Education for Critical Consciousness*, Paulo Freire

The preservice teachers in this study had a clearly articulated purpose for teaching informed by their *practical theories* that included the critical pedagogical tenets of *social analysis*, *classroom practice*, and *praxis*. Their desire to teach in a way that gave sight, gave voice, and gave back in transformative ways was clear. However, this purpose for



teaching only partially impacted their understanding of the function of economics. Economics, for these preservice teachers, could serve as a tool for *social analysis* and a way to analyze injustice, but did not necessarily fulfill a vision of teaching that included respect for student voice and giving back beyond social meliorism within the existing system. To address this, asset-oriented stances toward economic content knowledge must be used to show that preservice teachers have economic knowledge that can fulfill their critical purposes. Likewise, *classroom practice* built on a critique of the failures of neoclassicism to meet their purposes for teaching can alter conceptions of the function of economics to give students voice. Finally, preservice teachers deserve to explore transformative financial arrangements that allow them to give back to their community in a way that goes beyond individual success. Economics education can function according to critical purposes, but it requires teacher educators to transcend the nihilism born of neoclassical experiences and offer hopeful alternatives based on their preservice teachers' lives.

## **CHAPTER 6: “I FELT LIKE SOMETHING WAS MISSING, BUT I WASN’T SURE WHAT”: ALIGNMENT, EXTENSION, AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE FUNCTION OF ECONOMICS**

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

James 2:14-17 (*NIV*)

### **INTRODUCTION**

To analyze the motivation that leads to action, Burke (1969) invites consideration of five interrelated elements: act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose. Building on this pentad, Wertsch (1998) describes mediated action as a frame for sociocultural theory, utilizing a balanced approach to analysis that includes all five of these elements, and in particular emphasizes the role of narrative as a cultural tool influencing this mediation (Wertsch, 2000). This frame serves as a “tool for conducting inquiry about human action and motives” (Wertsch, 1999, p. 14) and reminds social scientists that “no one perspective in isolation is likely to provide an adequate account of human action” (p. 16). Thus, researchers must “live in the middle” (p. 17) of these elements as they seek to understand why participants take action. For researchers in the field of social studies education, any exploration of instructional decisions requires an understanding of five questions: “what was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency), and why (purpose)” (Burke, 1969, p. xv). This study seeks to highlight purpose as an element influencing action while maintaining a position ‘in the

middle’ of the other four elements of the pentad and recognizing the role of dominant narratives as cultural tools in economics. In-depth explorations of the mediation between purpose and action has been explored in history education (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Swan & Hicks, 2006), but attention to the relationship between instructional choices and purpose in economics education is absent from consideration in large-scale literature reviews of economic education topics (S. Miller & VanFossen, 2008; Schug & Walstad, 1991).

Economics education literature does include attention to the purpose of economics, largely falling into categories of economics for extant or critical social roles (Charkins, 2013; Moore, Sumrall, Mott, Mitchell, & Theobald, 2015; Sandlin, Burdick, Norris, & Hoechsmann, 2012; Whitlock, 2017), economics for citizenship (Vanfossen, 2005), and economics to understand the past and present (Bigelow, 2006; Mitchell, 2010). However, with limited exceptions (c.f. Ayers, 2015), these purposes are rarely linked to the choices that teachers make with respect to their instructional practices at all, much less their critical instructional practices. More common approaches link teacher decisions to content knowledge (Ayers, 2016) or to active citizenship practices (Rogers & Westheimer, 2017). While these are important considerations, they fail to include the depth of purpose, a purpose that includes ideas and ideals that arise from “deliberative reflection of the relationship between means and ends” (Fenstermacher, 1994, p. 45) which would serve as a significant element shaping the action that teachers take in their classroom.

Reflection is an integral part of teacher purpose (Zeichner & Liston, 2013), and has been a significant component of literature on teacher education since Dewey, and becoming perhaps the most embraced idea among teacher educators in the last several decades (Segall & Gaudelli, 2007). Reflection is “inextricably tied to the overall purposes of education in a democracy” (Rodgers & LaBoskey, 2016, p. 72) and thus must be seriously considered in pursuit of understanding the way that preservice and in-service teachers form their purpose as part of the goal for their experience (Dewey, 1938/1997) and leads to an enactment of that purpose as teachers perform the role of gatekeeper in the classroom (Thornton, 2005). As gatekeepers, teachers “make sense of the curriculum through their own beliefs, content knowledge, dispositions and critical commitments” (Blevins & Salinas, 2012, p. 13). Preservice teachers in this study, having laid out a very specific vision of the function of economics within their purpose for teaching and purpose for teaching social studies, implemented economics pedagogy that in many cases aligned with their purpose for teaching, but at times expanded beyond their expressed understanding of the function of economics, while also falling short in other areas. Their reflection on these choices was vital to understanding the way that purpose and enactment intersected.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In order to understand the way that these preservice teachers’ understanding of the function of economics was implemented, it was vital to consider the way that transformative purpose and critical pedagogy worked together. Two overarching concepts

were essential in understanding the manner in which the preservice teachers in this study enacted their function of economics. Elements of critical pedagogy were essential to determining how preservice teachers planned and executed lessons to include *social analysis*, or the ability to “perceive critically the themes of [the] time” (Freire, 2005a, p. 6), while valuing students unique backgrounds and voice through a *classroom practice* that ethnographically explores student funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) and builds curriculum through teacher research of students and their unique and complex contexts (Kincheloe, 2005).

These critical pedagogical emphases were intersected with the concept of reflection as a component of transformative teacher purpose. This included the way that teachers reflect before or after teaching, what Schön (1983) calls *reflection-on-action* and reflection during teaching, or *reflection-in-action*. These elements of reflection are necessary if teachers are to “be active in formulating the purposes and ends of their work” (Zeichner & Liston, 2013, p. 5). This description of reflection is not enough however, as a transformative purpose requires reflection to consider the discursively mediated nature of reflection (Day, 1993) where teachers learn through dialogical dimensions that “only emerge from processes of confrontation and reconstruction” (Day, 1993, p. 86) between self-understanding and the social arrangements of the classroom. Additionally transformative reflection requires a consideration of the socially mediated nature of reflection (Segall & Gaudelli, 2007) where reflection becomes a “public, collective, social process that helps prospective teachers implicate practice in broader political and social structures underlying schooling” (Segall & Gaudelli, 2007, p. 78).

Thus reflection, as utilized here, includes the temporal, discursive, and social dimensions and their interplay with purpose and society to manifest a transformative purpose.

### **Research Questions and Findings Summary**

This chapter is framed around the research question that asks how preservice teachers implement their understanding of the function of economics within their social studies instructional decisions. The data exposed two central themes. First, the enactment (Cornbleth, 1985) of economics comported with the expressed function of economics, demonstrating that economics was important to understanding the present and to perform *social analysis*. Second, transformative reflection lead to economics instruction that extended beyond the stated function of economics at times, indicating that the temporal, discursive, and social dimensions of reflection allowed for a broader enactment of economics. This extension beyond their articulated economic functionality carried with it several significant missed opportunities for aligning purpose and enactment, as discovered upon transformative reflection. An understanding of these themes lead to two findings. One, the act of teaching affords preservice teachers the reflective opportunity to expand their ideas of the function of economics to better fit their transformative purpose for teaching. And two, teacher educators can further build on this expansion by strategically planning critical economic methods instruction that extends the bounds of economics to the fullest realization of their preservice teachers' purpose.

## ALIGNMENT

As discussed in previous chapters (summarized in Figure 6), preservice teachers in this study had clear ideas about the function of economics within their stated purpose for social studies and their purpose for teaching in general. For these preservice teachers, economics was a way to analyze society, however that analysis was largely restricted to the present, rarely exploring the past and almost never extending to a potential future. This social analysis was an important component of their purpose for teaching as well, though within that purpose, preservice teachers did not conceptualize economics as having utility in terms of *classroom practice* or *praxis* beyond social meliorism.

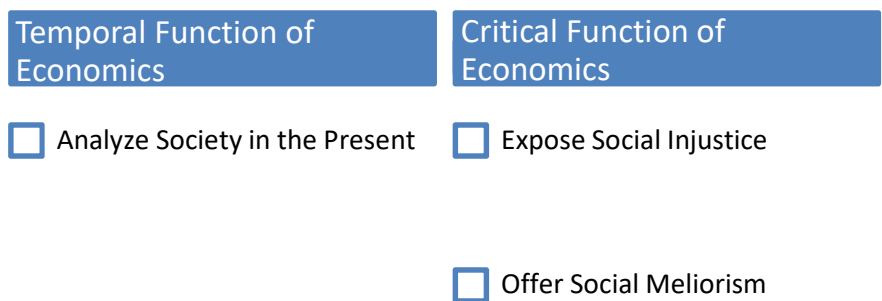


Figure 6: The Function of Economics as part of Social Studies and Teacher Purpose

This section explores the way in which preservice teachers aligned their instructional decisions with their expressed function of economics, and their reflections on those choices.

### Economics to Address Student Context

Given the emphasis that preservice teachers placed on the utility of economics to analyze society in the present and to expose social injustice, is no surprise that their instructional choices operationalized economics to explore specific issues that emerged through transformative reflection on their students' sociopolitical context. In interviews,

lesson plans, and class observations, preservice teachers demonstrated a function of economics through which their students could use the disciplinary tools of economics to analyze contemporary injustice in society in the form of gentrification, labor conditions, and racial, class, and gender inequality.

### ***Gentrification***

The economic aspects of gentrification was one of the most common present-day topic explored throughout all three grade levels in Discovery, and emerged through reflection on the “broader political and social structures” (Segall & Gaudelli, 2007) that specifically were shaping students’ lives in and around the local area. Most lessons were explicitly about exposing the forces of gentrification in the community. Cristina began a lesson on gentrification by asking students if they knew what gentrification was, finding enough student prior knowledge to construct a class definition of “when property values and taxes push people out of their neighborhoods” (observation, 7/14/17). Follow up included considerations of the legal processes that abet gentrification, consideration of property rights, the ramifications of gentrification on schools, social services, cultural access, and food security (observation, 7/14/17), essentially determining that gentrification, while a straightforward economic process, resulted in a number of negative sociopolitical externalities. Jonny, after analyzing Gandhi’s quote about being the change you wish to see in the world, held a similar class discussion on gentrification. While framed as a ‘social issue’ to spark ideas for a project they would do on social change, much of the class focused on using economics for *social analysis*, including



discussion of a video from PBS which addressed taxation, property values, eminent domain, and the resultant demographic changes involved in the gentrification of their specific community (observation, 7/13/17). Tori's exploration of gentrification also utilized an economic for *social analysis*, using stations to analyze the ramifications of gentrification, specifically the way that gentrification distorts livable wages and encourages segregation (lesson plan, 6/23/17). Lizeth followed a similar path, using a political cartoon and a video from NBC to introduce the economic processes of gentrification before analyzing the implications of gentrification on the racial and economic status of community schools with the end goal being for students to:

see that economically disadvantaged schools are located in areas with high percentages of Hispanic and African-American students. They will also see that every school with more than 30% of white students is less than 50% economically disadvantaged, most being only 20% economically disadvantaged, compared to schools with high percentage of Hispanics being about 80% economically disadvantaged (Lizeth, lesson plan, 7/18/17).

When asked why gentrification was such a prevalent economic theme for these preservice teachers, Tori pointed out the window and replied that it made economics "more relatable . . . because when you say gentrification you can show that to them immediately" (interview, 4/2/18). This reflection on the immediate social context of the students in Discovery was a springboard to *social analysis* of the particularly acute and pressing phenomenon of gentrification, thus conforming to their ideal function of economics within their purpose for teaching and teaching social studies.

## ***Injustice***

Other lessons utilized economics for *social analysis* to explore a variety of injustices that were determined to be omnipresent for students and media consumers in the current era and thus relevant to student context. Some were broad considerations of the economic ramifications of privilege and oppression (Jonny, lesson plan 6/20/17) and the “connections between stereotypes and privilege/oppression” (Jonny, lesson plan 6/26/17), or Cristina’s lesson that explored “the definition of ‘isms’ (racism, ageism, sexism, ableism, etc.) and discuss[ed] privilege and oppression” (lesson plan, 6/20/17). This lesson ended with homework where students were instructed to “notice how your privileges take a role in your life. Are certain places accessible to everyone? Are there any signs/propaganda that excludes a group of people? What is included/excluded in your community?” (lesson plan, 6/20/17). Other injustices that were relevant to student lives included Tori’s lessons on student protests in Los Angeles (lesson plan, 6/30/17) and exploration of the form and function of ‘ghettos’ in urban areas (lesson plan, 7/18/17) and class and race implications contained therein, and Jonny’s lesson on school segregation and the school-to-prison pipeline (observation, 7/13/17) and the way that affected life outcomes. Each of these lessons drew attention to relevant issues that their students were facing and utilized economics as a way to frame these systemic injustices.

## **Economics to Explore Epochal Themes**

Economics, for these preservice teachers, was also used as a tool for *social analysis* that would explore broader epochal themes, or the “aspirations, concerns, and values” (Freire, 2005a, p. 5) that mark a given era. Many of the above examples of using

economics to better understand student context conform to one or more of these categories, in fact, the vast majority of interview, observation, and lesson plan data that was coded as *social analysis* was also coded to refer to the present, and to refer to student context which was in line with previous findings about the function of economics within a broader purpose of for teaching and teaching social studies. The following instructional decisions, revealed in interviews, observations, and lesson plans, demonstrate the way that economics was implemented to explore systems and to challenge unjust social forces.

One of the most common epochal themes that was explored through economics was the wage system, in particular the concept of minimum wage and its adequacy as well as the idea of working conditions in relation to pay with particular attention to working conditions for immigrants. These topics were not simply chosen at random, rather, they were indicative of the economic systems that preservice teachers reflectively considered relevant to their students. As Lizeth stated in an interview:

A lot of them before I showed them the picture that I had up of people fighting for the \$15 minimum wage started telling so many things at me. Someone did bring up, they said, "Oh yes I've heard people are trying to make the minimum wage \$15." Other people would tell me, "Like yes my sister works 40 hours a week and only makes \$8 so it's really hard for her to pay off her bills."

So I feel they're making those connections to things that they've been seeing either in the news or with their own family helps them connect that, "These people were trying to fight for this couple of decades ago and I'm still seeing it with my family right now. That means that they're still struggling to make this happen" (interview, 7/30/17).

This concept of struggling in an unjust system of low wages was repeatedly an instructional choice that preservice teachers made, and was a way for preservice teachers to demonstrate transformative reflection as they confronted and reconstructed (Day,

1993) ideals of economic justice. Cristina, as part of a broader unit on the goals and achievements of the United Farm Workers (UFW) included a lesson where students were to “calculate minimum wage and adjust for inflation” (observation, 7/7/17) eventually realizing that adjusted for inflation, minimum wage is currently worth less than in the late 1960s (observation, 7/7/17). Building on this analysis of minimum wage demands by the UFW, Cristina asked, “Was getting paid more all they were looking for?” (observation, 7/7/17) and followed up by addressed working conditions, but also played video of Donald Trump calling immigrants rapists and drug dealers to help “students realize that a group of people can be tainted from . . . radical ideals going on at the time” (lesson plan, 7/6/17). Lizeth, independently (and in a different content area) planned similar calculations relating to changes since the 1963 March on Washington, and determined that the two dollar minimum wage they were marching for would be “\$16 in today’s dollars, and we have a minimum wage of \$7.25” (observation, 7/14/17) helping to build students to an exit ticket that asked about students to summarize what people were marching for in 1963, whether they themselves would march in 2017, and what we collectively could do to change how much people make (observation, 7/14/17).

Other explorations of the challenges of the wage system addressed the labor system through the specific challenges faced by immigrants. Nora selected an interview of a participant in the Bracero program to spark a discussion on conditions of immigrant labor, propaganda, and dehumanization that American immigrants face today (observation, 6/30/17). Later, she taught a lesson that addressed the economic impact of immigrants, utilizing a music video based on a remix of a song from *Hamilton: An*

*American Musical* titled *Immigrants (We get the job done)* (lesson plan, 7/11/17). She then facilitated a discussion on the economic themes in the song such as the need to work multiple jobs, the invisibility of manual labor, underpayment of undocumented workers, and colonialism (observation, 7/11/17). Jonny also structured a lesson that critically examined the myths about ‘illegal’ immigration and the true costs and benefits of this system, demonstrating that the wealthy benefit from this system through depressed labor costs, whereas these ‘illegal’ immigrants pay taxes and receive limited benefits (observation, 6/20/17). When asked about their goals for these lessons, Nora explained that she wanted to show “a really Marxist perspective. Like, why this is happening, maybe this is how the system, like, they don’t have control over their own means of production” (interview, 7/23/17). Cristina also had ideals of *social analysis* for critical perspectives that gave students:

some sort of understanding . . . I feel talking about the strikes and what their purpose was and what was going on at the time . . . they would understand better, like, if I were there, I would’ve done the same thing too (interview, 7/13/17).

These uses of economics for *social analysis* were designed to actively fulfill their purpose for economics and were mediated by the social makeup of their school and local context.

Preservice teachers also taught lessons that explored a variety of current issues relating to working conditions. Nora taught a lesson that addressed the economic impact of immigrants, utilizing a music video based on a remix of a song from *Hamilton: An American Musical* titled *Immigrants (We get the job done)* (lesson plan, 7/11/17). She then facilitated a discussion on the economic themes in the song such as the need to work

multiple jobs, the invisibility of manual labor, underpayment of undocumented workers, and colonialism (observation, 7/11/17). This interweaving of economics with labor issues was included in a lesson by Ernesto where he opened up a discussion of the Dakota Access Pipeline by trying to determine if “the economic benefits, like these politicians and these organizers are selling is that it’s going to be good for the economy, [if] it’s going to boost American jobs” (interview, 7/21/17), and had students determine “how much money are we going to get out of there or how many jobs” (interview, 7/21/17) to see if that would outweigh the environmental damage and cultural damage to Native Americans.

Other lessons by Ernesto and Nora dealt with the working conditions of agricultural laborers in Immokalee, Florida by watching the documentary *Food Chains*, in order to “have a greater understanding of farm workers’ conditions as they are now” (Nora, lesson plan, 7/5/17), and the working conditions of investigative journalists in Mexico who document the impact of drug cartels, to understand “why they think these journalists do what they do even if they know it’s dangerous and life threatening” (Ernesto, lesson plan, 7/10/17) and to underscore the need for journalism to respond to social conditions (observation, 7/10/17). As before, public policy issues of immigration, infrastructure projects, migrant rights, and the war on drugs all required an economic lens to better comprehend their effect on life in America in this particular historical moment.

Finally, preservice teachers made a number of instructional decisions to explore current issues of race, class, and gender inequality through economic concepts. Jonny described a lesson she taught on critical media literacy that used:

a political cartoon that was split down the middle and on one side it had two very wealthy people handing down like a pot of gold to their child. On the other side it was two, like less wealthy people handing down like a cardboard box for child and both of them said, 'Here son, this is for you. It's been passed down for generations.' (interview, 7/11/17)

Follow-up questions dealt with the ramifications of entrenched wealth disparity as it related to "implications in their life, . . . debunking stereotypes of people of a lower class", and their specific educational opportunities (interview, 7/11/17). Lizeth also explored structural inequality in a lesson that addressed current levels of income disparity from a racial angle. After explaining the difference between income and wealth, she instructed students to plot on the white board average income for African-Americans (\$38,000), Hispanics (\$47,000), and Whites (\$52,000). This visual representation of income disparity was followed by representations of the poverty line, analysis of government benefits, and factors that maintain the disparity (observation, 7/14/17).

Similarly, Cristina implemented a lesson on gender equality that used economic data and a 60 Minutes interview to examine the disparity between the relative success of the US Women's National Soccer Team as compared to the Men's Team, and the inverse disparity in their pay to ask why the successful women were paid less than the mediocre men ("The match of their lives," 2016). She then conducted a discussion on the reasons behind this disparity and other "challenges of that women face in sports" (observation, 7/14/17). Her goal with this economic exploration of the present was to "trigger [students] and get them mad. Find videos, find propaganda, find something that would make them upset on purpose" so they could "talk about social injustice" (interview, 7/13/17). These uses of economics to expose present injustices along class, race, and

gendered lines would eventually lead to a broader functionality of economics than had been described in their original articulation of the purpose of economics, but also relied upon a critical vision for *social analysis* in the present.

These instructional choices, both to utilize economics as a way to reflect on student context, and to analyze society in a critical way conformed to their stated purpose for utilizing economics within their broader purpose for social studies and purpose for teaching. Their reflective processes drew out lessons that spoke to relevant economic issues in their students' community such as gentrification, wage labor, working conditions, and race, gender, and class inequality. Additionally, the way that economics for *social analysis* was interwoven with economics in the present, and economics that related to students' lives demonstrates the necessity of exploring the narrative of economics through a number of lenses, and that no one function of economics is complete without understanding the full range of forces mediating action in the classroom.

## **BEYOND ALIGNMENT**

Previous chapters (summarized in Figure 7) have revealed that there were elements of preservice teachers' conceptualization of the purpose of social studies and teaching that went beyond their articulated function of economics. Notably, these included the idea that social studies was a significant tool to understand the past and could be used to plan future action for justice. Likewise, teaching was about action in the form of *classroom practices* that valued students' voice, experience, and unique contexts



as well as *praxis*, or the melding of theory and practice into action for humanizing purposes.



Figure 7: The purpose of social studies and the purpose of teaching

In some cases, these disjunctures were confirmed by the opportunities that were missed in the instructional decisions of these preservice teachers, yet, there were cases when the misalignment of instructional decisions and the function of economics actually represented an extension of what economics could do as part of their broader purposes for social studies and teaching. Essentially, these teachers put into practice a broader, deeper, and more active economics than they were able to describe verbally or in writing.

### Missed Opportunities

Preservice teachers saw social studies as a way to inform student action to reshape society in the future for justice, and saw the purpose of teaching as a way to achieve *praxis* via the intersection of *social analysis* and *classroom practice*. Yet many of their instructional decisions indicate an inability to utilize economics to achieve these, a discrepancy that they recognized, as Cristina stated, “I just feel really bad because I’m

awful at economics. I don't understand that many of the concepts myself, so it's really hard for me to actually teach it. How can I teach something I'm unsure of" (interview, 7/13/17)? Lizeth agreed, saying "There's not much that I can just pull out of my brain to connect to the lessons. It would require me to do a lot of research and learning on my own so that I can create something" (interview, 7/30/17). Nora summed up the unknown unknowns inherent in the marriage of economics and purpose when asked about whether she knew something was missing in her economics pedagogy, or whether she simply ran out of time or made other choices. She replied:

It was just the former. I felt something was missing, but I wasn't sure what, because to me economics is very abstract. I'm not really sure exactly what themes in economics look like because I have never taken any economics (interview, 7/23/17).

In interviews, observations, and lesson plans, preservice teachers implemented instructional decisions where some economic functionality was potentially missing.

These included opportunities to utilize economics to better comprehend past injustices, illuminate current situations that affect students, and plan for action in the future.

### ***Economic Sacrifice as a Fulcrum for Change***

Instructional decisions about historical events often missed economic context that would speak to the preservice teachers' desire to teach social studies to challenge dominant narratives and explore change for justice. For example, both Cristina and Nora taught lessons on Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers. Cristina's lesson involved a great deal of economics as context, as students put Cesar Chavez on trial to determine whether he "was a good person or bad" (observation 7/7/17). While this framing allowed

for an interesting exploration of the role of Dolores Huerta and other participants in the Delano Grape Strike (observation, 7/7/17), and made space for some contextual economic information about the minimum wage and inflation adjustments to farmworker wages (observation, 7/7/17), economics was not used to analyze the impact of the strike. Importantly, economics could illustrate the sacrifice that workers faced in the form of financial hardship, and could help illustrate the threat that the collective action represented to the entire supply chain of grapes in the form of the inability of growers, shippers, and retail to profit without the contribution of labor.

A similar analysis was missing in Nora's lesson on the same topic. Her lessons were designed to bring about "a greater understanding of the Delano Grape Strike, Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez" (lesson plan, 6/20/17), and did so, utilizing pedagogical strategies including primary source analysis (observation, 6/22/17), pop culture artifacts, and class discussions (observation, 6/28/17). Despite this planning and effective teaching, students' understanding of the suffering and success of the movement were again missing the economic layers that enhance both an empathetic perspective for the participants and their suffering, as well as the power of economic pressure as a fulcrum for social change.

### ***Economics to Name the World***

A significant component of the preservice teachers' purpose for teaching involved a *classroom practice* that included issues and concerns from students' lives and allowed them to use their voice to speak back to injustices they experience. Yet, economics was

not used in a way that would allow students to name their world, or “apprehend [their] situation as an historical reality susceptible of transformation” (Freire, 1993, p. 85). An example of this missed opportunity occurred in a lesson designed to trouble prevailing biases in advertisement through critical media literacy. In this lesson, Jonny facilitated a discussion and critique of several product advertisements including a movie poster, tampon commercial, deodorant, and several other consumer products where advertisements were explicitly gendered (observation, 7/7/17). The discussions on the impact of these advertisements were used to generate ideas for a project that involved “creating an advertisement that is all-inclusive for a product that they create” (lesson plan, 7/6/17). This lesson fit her purpose for teaching as they explored materials relevant to students’ lives and:

talked about how it can hurt people or help people. Sometimes when you don't see yourself reflected in ads, you might not feel-- you might feel less than, but that's what you think they're trying to portray. Then also, when you do identify with something, it might be a positive thing that you feel towards about, it might empower you too (interview, 7/11/17).

The end result of this project lead to “a lot of them chang[ing], like, color schemes” (7/11/17) and using gender-inclusive pronouns. There is an element of empowerment to Jonny’s project that addresses systemic issues of representation, yet it potentially misses an important economic critique of the advertising industry as a whole. Students turned their critical media lenses on the inclusiveness of advertising, but missed the opportunity to critique the very idea of consumerism and manufactured desire itself (Sandlin et al., 2012). Economic critiques were also noticeably absent in one of Lizeth’s lessons on the demographic makeup of middle schools in the area. Students used data to determine that

majority minority schools were more likely to be labeled economically disadvantaged (lesson plan, 7/18/17), however, there was no economic calculation to explain the funding ramifications of this discrepancy, nor was there an attempt to determine the longstanding 'education debt' (Ladson-Billings, 2006) that continues to accumulate for students of color in under-funded schools. Finally, Nora's lesson on the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and working conditions for agricultural laborers (lesson plan, 7/5/17) was a fantastic exploration of the injustices that these workers suffer under. Yet even though her discussion included some elements of "a Marxist perspective" (interview, 7/23/17) vis-a-vis control of the means of production, the thrust of the activity was confined to building empathy for those workers in that situation. Alternative economic lessons might involve considering alternative economic models of worker-ownership, using economic lenses to explore the specific working conditions that students and their families face, or considering how economic theory and action might help conceptualize methods of seizing the means of production themselves. The missed opportunities for using economics to name the world lead to an incomplete manifestation of purpose within the function of economics.

### ***Economics to Inform Future Action***

Many instructional decisions that these preservice teachers made included considerations of future action for justice, yet too often, this action was not predicated on or supplemented by economic data. This included examples such as Nora's lesson on the distinction between prejudice and racism (lesson plan, 6/26/17) and the absence of

material consequences from the definition of racism used. Scenarios used to cement the difference between the two terms included important ideas such as the racism inherent in segregation and the racism and prejudice inherent in “Trump’s travel ban (Executive Order 13769)” (class artifact, 6/26/17), but the ‘action’ required of students at the end is to “come up with a list of prejudices you feel people might have about you. Then, come up with a list of prejudices you might have about people who are different than you” (class artifact, 6/26/17). This is a helpful reflection to reduce interpersonal bias, but action that attends to the economic ramifications of segregation, immigration restrictions, or other policies might have a greater impetus for change. Tori’s lesson on forms of citizenship suffered from a similar blind spot. Her objective was for students to “learn about how to be an active citizen” (lesson plan, 7/10/17), and class activities included comparing active citizenship to responsible citizenship, and developing a list of activities that active citizens do (observation, 7/10/17). Active citizenship involved “being informed . . . respecting and protecting others’ rights” and did not require documentation from federal authorities (observation, 7/10/17). These examples, and the activity they were meant to inspire did not include a consideration of how economics could allow students to be informed about structural injustice in society, what rights of others are being violated by extreme poverty and abysmal government support, or economic forms of civic responsibilities beyond individualism (c.t. Ostrom, 2015).

Finally, Jonny’s lesson on social change prepared students for a project designed to deal with an issue that they felt was unjust. After exploring a variety of methods through which people have fomented social change in the past, including non-violent

resistance, art, music (observation, 7/11/17), clothing, and advertisements (observation, 7/12/17) they began work on a project with the understanding that there are “lots of options to advocate for social change” (observation, 7/12/17), but were required to advocate for their topic through a form of media. This active, justice-oriented project is a great way to build a pedagogy of action within a social studies classroom, however, nowhere in their analysis of past action was the relative success of any particular movement considered with respect to the tactics. As a basis for action, students should have the pertinent economic understanding of whether or not, for example, a boycott is relatively more successful than an awareness campaign. Both forms of social change have merits, but an informed advocacy project requires an economic understanding of the material harm an injustice inflicts as well as the economic tools to address the injustice.

### **Extension beyond Stated Purpose**

While the previous section demonstrated the ways that economic lessons fell short of stated reasons for teaching and teaching social studies, this section explores a subset of instructional decisions that went beyond the described functionality of economics as stated in interviews and class artifacts. In interviews, observations and lesson plans, these preservice teachers routinely described implementation of and demonstrated the use of economics to better understand the past, and to speak to issues and events that affected their students, offering a relative and meaningful *classroom practice*.

### ***The Past***

Uses of economics to better understand the past typically fell into two forms: bridging the past to the present with economics, and contextualizing the past with economics. These forms of temporal exploration were aligned with purposes for teaching social studies, but had not initially been part of the preservice teachers' described function of economics. Yet, they did extend economics into the past via these forms, as Nora discussed in an interview on her application of economics to a multi-day lesson on the United Farm Workers, saying:

My main goal was honestly just to get them-- To expose them to something that was happening right now that related directly to Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta and the work that they had done and to think a little bit, like I wrote in here, "to think about how this is progress and decline and change and continuity and how we think that we over so many years and decades of protest and changes in law that we have changed fundamental aspects of our society and become better, but here's this example of they're fighting for the same exact thing and they're doing the same exact thing to get the same change. So, we haven't changed as much as we think we have (interview, 7/23/17).

In class, she asked students to compare the economic tactics of the United Farm Workers in the past with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers today (class artifact, 7/7/17), and also utilized photos comparing the Bracero program living conditions in California with living conditions in Immokalee, Florida today (class artifact, 7/7/17) to determine if there has been an economic change for the better. Lizeth used economics for similar purposes in her lesson on segregation and gentrification, utilizing information on housing policy, economic data, and personal testimony to illustrate that the "desegregation process was difficult and is still being fought today. Old city ordinances still keep cities like [ours] segregated and gentrification is hurting people in communities that used to be occupied predominantly by people of color" (lesson plan, 6/29/17). Cristina's lesson on Cesar



Chavez also invited students to consider the economic links between the past and present with questions such as “Does the UFW still exist?”, “What were farm worker wages like before and after Cesar Chavez? What are they now?”, “Does he have an impact today?”, “What were wages back then adjusted for inflation?”, “How does the minimum wage compare to today?” (observation, 7/7/17). These questions and the resultant data showed that economics was necessary to link the past with the present.

Additionally, economics functioned in the past as a way to provide a deeper context for the events under study. In a lesson on social change, Jonny described four elements that are necessary for social change including “attention, consistency, persistency, and augmentation” (observation, 7/11/17) and supplemented this with historical examples including Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus boycott’s economic impact (attention), and time frame (persistency) to show the financial damage that was necessary to challenge segregation in Montgomery (observation, 7/11/17). Additional examples that used economics included an analysis of the recent ‘Day without Immigrants’ and the financial impact it had (observation, 7/11/17) as well as the economic ramifications of Apartheid (observation, 7/12/17). Lizeth also utilized economics to better understand movements for social change in the past, and also explored the financial pressure that boycotts had in the Civil Rights movement, including the Greensboro lunch counter sit-ins, the Montgomery bus boycott, and also included information on Martin Luther King Jr.’s attention to poverty and the deleterious effect that the Vietnam War had on the War on Poverty (observation, 7/12/17). Elements of economic context for the past appeared in Nora’s lesson on the Bracero program where

she explored the World War II shortage of labor that lead to the program, and the harsh reality that greeted the workers as the war ended (observation, 6/30/17). The act of teaching also brought about reflection on the need for more economics to better contextualize the past, as Cristina described her wish for a more “holistic view for the students. For them to understand more about the relevancy of the boycott at the time and the economics back at the time” (interview, 7/13/17).

These two functions of economics in the past were not mutually exclusive, in fact, greater context with economics was often necessary to understand the relation between the past and the present, as Lizeth stated when talking about one of her civil rights lessons:

I think the goal [was] to help the students understand the big important thing that people were fighting for during Civil Rights which was to increase the minimum wage and to have better job opportunities. And to have them see how this is something that people are still working to get nowadays (interview, 7/30/17). These instructional decisions to use economics to explore the past represented a departure from their original description of the function of economics as operating solely in the present. The reflection on the sociopolitical structures of the present sent them grasping for methods to better make sense of the content they were teaching and to relate it to the present, methods they found within the disciplinary boundaries of economics. This use of economics to fulfill purpose also manifested in the way economics was used in the classroom.

### ***Classroom Practice***

In addition to the extension of economics into the past, preservice teachers also stepped beyond their stated function of economics as a means of *social analysis* into the use of economics to facilitate a more relevant and humanizing *classroom practice*. In general, these instructional decisions allowed students to have a voice in class about the economic issues they were concerned with, and use economics to explore relevant epochal themes that students could address. Throughout the summer, preservice teachers continually ensured that students were at the center of economic content, by including their ideas and opinions on factors that affect their lives. In some cases this was as simple as giving students the space to generate project topics that “are important to you, either community or nationwide, [select] an issue you want to report on” (Ernesto, observation, 6/30/17), but often included specific economic content such as student voice with respect to stereotypes around lower economic classes, as Jonny recounted:

So we were talking about the stereotypes . . . and then we also went into like general stereotypes of people of a lower class. Like them being like dirty people. They felt like they were looked on as like dirty people sometimes and like-- Which is very similar, like I think I talked to a class today about the caste system. . . They were feeling these things without knowing like that was actually a [term] in here I guess. Yes, that was a pretty big topic for them. They were really interested in that like kind of debunking with stereotypes talking about how great their families were and how loving and caring they were (interview, 7/11/17).

The opportunity to speak to students’ experiences within economic topics was present in instructional decisions about gentrification, as Cristina continually asked, “Who are the people in your neighborhood? What do they do? What do they drive? Did someone else live there recently? Who is affected by gentrification? What are other ways gentrification affects your community?” (observation, 7/14/17). Jonny also implemented a lesson on

gentrification that asked “What is gentrification doing to your community?” (observation, 7/13/17), and continually planned lessons that asked students how “oppression or privilege in their communities impacts their lives and the lives of people they care about” (lesson plan, 6/20/17) and how students are affected by “issues that impact [our city] such as segregation . . . and homelessness” (lesson plan, 7/13/17). These instructional decisions demonstrate how economics functioned as a way to allow students to speak to the impact of prevailing economic injustices in their communities.

Preservice teachers also utilized economics as a way to inspire action to address injustice more broadly. Ernesto described this function when asked about his goal for an investigative journalism project, saying:

I think that my goal for that lesson was, as we talked about, critical pedagogy, being able to actually do that, to be able to . . . take that theory and take that idea and actually develop it into an actual action in my classroom and do something with it (interview, 7/21/17).

Lizeth’s exploration of the impact of sit-ins was designed to show that “it was students who did this, anyone can do it, you can too” (observation, 7/13/17). Other lessons showed this commitment to inspiring action, such as Tori’s lesson on gentrification that asked students “If you could, how would you change it?” before asking them to build an action plan to address the issue (lesson plan, 6/23/17), Cristina’s lesson on ‘isms’ (racism, sexism, ageism, etc.) that first asked them to figure out “how your privileges take a role in your life. Are certain places accessible to everyone? Are there any signs/propaganda that excludes a group of people? What is included/excluded in your community?” moved on to developing “solutions in an ideal world for these issues” (lesson plan, 6/20/17). Nora asked students to create a pamphlet to “educate [people] about the issues of farm

workers' rights today" (lesson plan, 7/7/17), and Jonny's students created their own inclusive advertisement for "a product they create" designed to address prevailing biases in advertising media (lesson plan 7/5/17). While the actual implementation of these projects largely did not rise to the level of *praxis*, in that many of the projects stayed within the walls of the classroom, the preservice teachers' decisions to promote economic action generated by students showed that they were committed to a *classroom practice* that centered on student concerns. The reflective nature of their economic instructional decisions showed a desire to learn from and build on the issues that were most pressing to students even in courses that were designed to explore African-American civil rights, Latinx civil rights, and journalism, thus indicating a functional vision of economics that superseded their original explanation of the way economics fit their purpose for teaching and purpose of social studies.

## DISCUSSION

This chapter considered the question of how preservice teachers implement their understanding of the function of economics within their social studies instructional decisions. The study utilized a theoretical frame that intersected elements of critical pedagogy through preservice teachers' *social analysis* as well as their *classroom practice* with the concept of transformative reflection, specifically forms of reflection that evolve from confronting society (Day, 1993) and those that are mediated by the sociopolitical structures of the era (Segall & Gaudelli, 2007). The resultant data demonstrated two themes. One, preservice teachers' instructional decisions aligned with their described

function of economics by adhering to the idea that economics was a valuable tool to understand the present and for *social analysis*. Two, upon reflection, preservice teachers fell short of their purpose for teaching social studies with respect to a more comprehensive understanding of the past, present, and to plan for future action; however, there were times that economics was used to understand the past and foment a *classroom practice* that addressed student concerns and allowed them to think of potential options to address those concerns. The derivation of these themes illuminated two important findings in response to the research question of how preservice teachers implement their understanding of the function of economics within social studies instructional decisions. First, reflection seemed to naturally open doors for preservice teachers to extend their use of economics in ways that went beyond their previously articulated understanding of the function of economics. Second, this natural opening through reflection created an atmosphere where minimal, targeted professional development in economic instruction allowed for maximum absorption of economic content and pedagogy addressing the areas in which economics falls short of preservice teachers' purpose for teaching seems to enhance the likelihood that they will implement a more expansive vision of economics within their social studies instructional decisions.

### **Reflection Opens Doors for Economics**

Whether in alignment with their purpose for teaching and teaching social studies, or misalignment, economics functioned throughout time and as a means to enhance *social analysis* and *classroom practice*. The instructional decisions that demonstrated this

extended functionality indicate the openings that grew out of reflective practice. Specifically, preservice teachers reflected as they planned and as they taught on the need for economics to go beyond *social analysis* in the present. This *reflection-in* and *on-action* (Schön, 1983) was enhanced through transformative reflection that acknowledges that “reflective practice occurs within a social context” (Day, 1993, p. 84) and that reflection is mediated by the broader political and social structures of that context. In this case, the social context of working with mostly Black and Brown students in an urban area experiencing significant gentrification lead to economics extending to consider the temporal connections between labor conditions for migrant farm workers, economic goals of the civil rights movement, and the ramifications of segregation in housing and education policy. These issues where economics functioned as a bridge between the past and the present were attempts to answer reflective questions about how “students’ contexts restrict and/or enable their opportunities, and what is my role within these contexts” (Zeichner & Liston, 2013, p. 78)? Their role in this case also necessitated a *classroom practice* that spoke to issues of injustice, representation, and promoted action, thereby demonstrating a more expansive and critical function of economics than was initially described. Thus, preservice teachers implemented a critical vision of economics as a natural extension to fulfill their purpose for teaching. Too much of the economic dominant narrative ignores context (Bögenhold, 2010) and history (John King, 2012), yet perhaps *because* of their lack of familiarity with the economic discipline, they bypassed traditional, neoclassical economic concepts and instead implemented economic pedagogy that went beyond what is typical of neoclassical economic curriculum.

### **Urban Teacher Program as Context**

The socially and discursively mediated nature of reflection (Day, 1993; Segall & Gaudelli, 2007) is not fully explored without considering the way the Urban Teacher program functioned as a platform for exploring purpose and an impetus for implementing a pedagogy that included elements of critical pedagogy and transformative purpose. As described in detail in Chapter 3, the program emphasized the need to ethnographically explore students' lives and backgrounds (Moll et al., 1992) while promoting critical multicultural citizenship (Castro, 2013) and problematizing the role of dominant narratives (Wertsch, 2000) in social studies that maintain unjust social structures. As part of these critical emphases, the choice to model an economic activity in a professional development session (described in Chapter 3) that attended to the connection between the past and present and *social analysis* proved to be instrumental in extending the function of economics temporally. By exploring the role of economics as a way to contextualize mass movements for change, preservice teachers gained a modicum of content knowledge, but more importantly gained the confidence to implement social studies instructional decisions that drew on the utility of economics in a way that fit their purpose for teaching and teaching social studies. This kind of modeling can only help, however, when preservice teachers categorically examine their conceptualization of transformative teacher purpose. They should explore how ideology has shaped their practical theories (Apple, 2004; hooks, 2013), they should persistently consider the manner in which reflection operates contextually and in conjunction with students (Day, 1993; Freire, 2005b), and should continually progress toward a counter-hegemonic stance (Bartolomé,



2004). For preservice teachers to act on their purpose, they must also have opportunities to explore critical pedagogy, and think about they want to do as teachers in terms of *social analysis*, *classroom practice*, and *praxis* (Freire, 1993). It is necessary to have this clear framework to see the gaps that preservice teachers have between their expressed purpose for teaching and teaching social studies, and their ideas about the function of economics within those purposes. Whether teacher educators model economic content to extend the function of economics, or preservice teachers seek out economic methods themselves, it is imperative that critical pedagogy, transformative purpose, and disciplinary content be considered in all of their forms in order for a more expansive implementation of economic functionality to permeate instructional decision making.

For the preservice teachers in this study, Figure 8 represents their understanding of the purpose of teaching and the purpose of social studies. Dark boxes represent a **stated and enacted** fulfillment of these purposes through economics, while light boxes represent an **enacted but not stated** purpose. White boxes were **neither stated functions of economics nor enacted**. Pertinent to this finding is the use of the professional development session to begin to critically evaluate the past with economics. While reflection prompted preservice teachers to use economics to give voice to their students, the added support for using economics to demonstrate the connections between social movements of the past and the present were useful and implemented immediately in their

instructional decisions.



Figure 8: Social studies, teaching purpose, and instructional decisions

Pursuant to this understanding, preservice teachers should seek out material to help them address the white boxes in Figure 8. Promoting active citizenship with and achieving *praxis* cannot be confined to only certain elements of their purpose for teaching and teaching social studies, it must extend into their economics pedagogy as well.

## CONCLUSION

For the truly humanist educator and the authentic revolutionary, the object of action is the reality to be transformed by them together with other people . . .  
*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire

In this study, preservice teachers implemented a function of economics within their instructional decisions that aligned with their stated purpose by critically evaluating the present. While there were instructional decisions that demonstrated missed opportunities for economic functionality that would more thoroughly fulfill their purpose for teaching, they did extend their function of economics beyond their stated purpose. This involved the use of economics to connect the past to the present, as well as the use

of economics to promote a *classroom practice* that was relevant and meaningful to students. The alignment and misalignment here demonstrates the power of reflection as a way for economics to naturally fill the space between the function of economics and the purpose for teaching and allows teacher educators to better plan methods instruction that exposes preservice teachers to economics instruction that goes beyond what they think economics can be into a more active and transformative pedagogy.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Who are they to just take shit and hoard it?  
Who am I that I don't get my portion?  
The most impressionable minds  
Get molested and informed by manipulating forces  
Don't fret little man, don't cry  
They can never take the energy inside you were born with  
Knowing that, understand you could never be poor  
You already won the war, you were born rich  
...  
Them and the lost minds thinking they're smarter than us  
Don't understand love's importance  
And we can weaponize that, bring 'em back to the truth  
Where the ashes and dust got formed in

*A Christmas Fucking Miracle, Run the Jewels*

### INTRODUCTION

Economics is political. While social studies encompasses a number of subdisciplines, including history, geography, civics/government, sociology, economics, anthropology, and psychology (Parker, 2015); only one of these subdisciplines can claim an entire agency within the United States executive branch dedicated to advising the President on policy (Employment Act of 1946). While many other subdisciplines are relevant to political decisions, only economics holds scientific stature such that decisions about spending, taxation, employment, and inequality are distilled to calculations within the discipline's framework (Earle, Moran, & Ward-Perkins, 2016). Rather than the purpose of schooling and social studies being to educate for democracy (Dewey, 1916; Parker, 2003), the purpose of schooling has been perverted to economic ends, where "for liberals and conservatives, nearly everything is justified through two economic promises: the possibility of upward economic mobility and the necessity of global economic

competition” (Saltman, 2013 as cited in Nichols, 2017). Economics is political in the way that it has been afforded this outsized importance in the fabric of our political system, our daily lives, and in schools. Economics is political in the way the discipline is shaped to conform to the neoclassical dominant narrative (Fine, 2008; A. Freeman, 2010; Keen, 2011; Lee, 2004b). Finally, economics is political in the way it has been traditionally understudied within social studies education (S. Miller & VanFossen, 2008), leading to a lack of literature on preparing social studies teachers to do anything other than maintain the status quo. This qualitative study addresses the political implications of economics head-on, by attending to the dominant narrative in the discipline, critiquing its use in schools, addressing the need for economic education research, and offering an alternative vision of economics that aligns with critical pedagogy and transformative purpose.

The goal of this study was to explore the way that preservice teachers conceptualized and enacted their purpose for teaching economics. Specifically, this study was interested in how critical purposes for teaching and for teaching social studies might align with or deviate with purposes for teaching economics. The framework utilized to investigate these ideas drew from two significant bodies of literature. Critical pedagogy elements of *social analysis* (Apple, Au, & Gandin, 2009; Giroux, 2011), *classroom practice* (Freire, 1993), and *praxis* (Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 2015) were intersected with transformative purpose which included teachers’ *practical theories* (Handel & Lauvas, 1987; Zeichner & Liston, 2013), *reflection* (Schön, 1983), and *assuming a counter-hegemonic stance* (Bartolomé, 2004). The data presented in chapters four, five, and six correspond to the following research questions

1. How does content knowledge and previous experience with economics influence the way preservice teachers understand the function of economics within social studies education?
2. How do preservice teachers describe their purpose for teaching, and how does that impact their understanding of the function of economics?
3. How do these teachers implement their understanding of the function of economics within their social studies instructional decisions?

In a qualitative case study of six preservice teachers enrolled in an urban teaching program, several themes emerged that explored the way economics was conceptualized within social studies, as a part of teacher purpose and ultimately put into practice through instructional choices.

Chapter four, “*Economics in the now: Economics for social analysis exclusively in the present,*” offers the first subset of themes designed to answer the research question, How does content knowledge and previous experience with economics influence the way preservice teachers understand the function of economics within social studies education? Preservice teachers in this study described both economics and social studies education as tools for *social analysis* (McLaren, 2015) that allow students to understand social forces, and conceptualize justice. However, preservice teachers in this study conformed to the general consensus of the literature (Ayers, 2016) that social studies teachers have limited content knowledge in traditional economics principles. Thus while social studies was an important tool to critically evaluate the past and promote active citizenship in the future, the function of economics was conceptually confined to the present, and did not offer a

challenge to dominant narratives in the past (Salinas & Blevins, 2014; Wertsch, 2000), nor a foundation for active, critical citizenship (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Castro, 2013). The findings illustrate that for preservice teachers who are likely unfamiliar with economic content, a vision of social studies education for *social analysis* is incomplete without an explicit *counter-hegemonic stance* (Bartolomé, 2004) that links economic content to past injustices, current inequality, and future action, and is threaded throughout the teacher education program.

Chapter five, “*Teaching is about doing, economics is about understanding: The expansiveness of teacher purpose and the limitations of economics,*” adds themes that address the research question, How do preservice teachers describe their purpose for teaching, and how does that impact their understanding of the function of economics? By addressing preservice teachers’ *practical theories* (Zeichner & Liston, 2013), data revealed that preservice teachers had an expansive purpose for teaching that included several elements of critical pedagogy including *social analysis*, *classroom practice*, and *praxis* (Freire, 1993, 2005; Kincheloe, 2008). Their purpose for teaching economics stopped short of this expansive vision, however, conforming to critical pedagogical notions of *social analysis*, but offering little in the way of a transformative *classroom practice*, nor any sort of *praxis* designed to marry action and reflection in pursuit of justice. This apparent misalignment reveals that critical purpose in economics might be better supported by appreciative stances to economic content knowledge, critiquing the restrictions of the neoclassical economic narrative, and exposure to transformative financial arrangements as a form of economic action.

Chapter six, “*I felt like something was missing, but I wasn’t sure what*’: *Alignment, extension, and missed opportunities for implementing the function of economics*,” includes themes in response to the research question, How do these teachers implement their understanding of the function of economics within their social studies instructional decisions? Conceptions of *reflection-in* and *–on-action* (Schön, 1983) as well as critical pedagogical tenets of *social analysis* and *classroom practice* revealed that preservice teachers responded to the unique contexts of their students to address issues relevant to the present. While there were situations where they recognized their inability to implement economic curriculum that aligned with their purpose for teaching and vision of social studies, their instructional practices went beyond their stated ideas of the function of economics, particularly with respect to connecting the past to the present via economics. Reflection opened doors that indicate preservice teachers may be able to put more economic curriculum into practice than they initially assume is possible, and that targeted modeling can help preservice teachers implement unfamiliar content in keeping with their purpose for teaching and ideals about social studies.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

The research questions, emerging themes, and findings from the previous three chapters demonstrate the challenges of integrating economics into perceptions of social studies, purposes for teaching, and instructional decisions. The themes and findings from the preceding chapters also inform three overarching implications that underlie the recommendations of the study. One, this study demonstrates that a lack of content



knowledge, as traditionally conceptualized, may not be a death knell for economic education, and in fact, a relative unfamiliarity with neoclassical precepts may help shape a more relevant vision of economics that attends to teacher purpose. Two, the preceding chapters demonstrate the necessity of approaches to social studies that are inclusive of disciplines and purpose so that preservice teachers can better implement their idealized vision of teaching and teaching social studies. And three, vital to a social studies practice that seeks to be critical of past and present social structures and address injustice is an explicit critique of the manifestation of the dominant narrative in economics as represented by the neoclassical paradigm. The rest of this chapter will expand on these implications, describe recommendations for social studies educators and teacher educators, and conclude with limitations of this study and potential directions for future research.

### **Looking Past the Pervasive Content Knowledge Problem**

Despite the relative lack of research into economics as part of social studies education (S. Miller & VanFossen, 2008), two related findings are well-established in the literature. One, social studies teachers are ill-prepared to teach economics in terms of coursework and preparation (Aske, 2000, 2003; Ayers, 2015; Joshi & Marri, 2006; Lynch, 1990, 1994; Walstad, 2001); and two, this lack of preparation has a deleterious effect on student learning in economics (Allgood & Walstad, 1999; Bosshardt & Watts, 2005; Butters & Asarta, 2011). This study reinforces the first of these precepts as the six participants combined had spent four semesters in economics classes, all of which were

in high school, yet the unique contributions to the literature that arose offer an alternative to the implication that limited content knowledge and familiarity with economics requires more emphasis on economics as a way to increase familiarity and build content knowledge.

Deficit thinking is a concept that holds that certain students are inherently disadvantaged based on alleged “limited intellectual abilities, linguistic shortcomings, lack of motivation to learn and immoral behavior” (Valencia, 2012, p. 2). While deficit thinking is conceptually linked to all manner of school practices and structural discrimination, two components of deficit thinking stand out with respect to conventional approaches to economic content knowledge among social studies teachers: pseudoscience and orthodoxy. Valencia (2012) describes deficit thinking as a form of pseudoscience that attempts to persuade via empiricism. While studies that evaluate teacher content knowledge in economics are often rigorous and conducted in scientific ways, they proceed from unsound foundations. By assuming that coursework in economics (c.f. Aske, 2003), adherence to the ‘Economic Way of Thinking’ (c.f. Ayers, 2016), or various standardized tests of economic literacy (c.f. Allgood & Walstad, 1999; Butters & Asarta, 2011) are ideal ways to measure content knowledge or student achievement in economics, researchers foreclose on the possibility of economic knowledge outside that of traditional neoclassical economic content knowledge, or relevant experience with economics outside of formal structures. This pseudoscientific understanding becomes orthodoxy, or an assumption that is beyond question and maintained by the dominant class (Bourdieu, 1977). It is vital to the hegemony of neoclassical economics that

economics teachers and students be portrayed as lacking in economic content knowledge so that efforts to ‘improve’ economic education manifest in efforts to better impose neoclassical dogma. An alternative to this deficit orientation lies in two-pronged approach that addresses specific critical content knowledge and makes use of appreciative stances toward economic content knowledge.

First, the above discussion of deficit thinking does not imply that all teachers possess an understanding of economics commensurate with mastery. Indeed, findings from this study show this is not the case. What the study does show, however, is that there is a need for critical economic content knowledge that is specifically tailored to preservice teachers’ desire to critique unjust power structures in the past and present, and work to topple those structures in the future. Critical economic content knowledge includes the use of economics as a tool for *social analysis*, as a method for bringing students’ lived experiences into the curriculum as a form of *classroom practice*, and the explicit choice to use economics to reflect and act to overturn unjust social structures through *praxis*. This attention to economic knowledge addresses transformative purposes for teaching social studies (Blevins & Talbert, 2015) and foment a counter-hegemonic stance (Bartolomé, 2004) in economics.

Second, preservice teachers in this study (indeed, people everywhere) have lived lives full of economics. Recognizing that these experiences count as economic knowledge is a core component of an appreciative stance toward economic knowledge. It is not a deficit on behalf of the preservice teachers themselves, but a failure of mainstream economics to recognize the inherent worth of values, beliefs, and life

experiences outside the neoclassical perspective (Ferber & Nelson, 2003; Nelson, 2010). Broadening economic perspectives will allow these appreciative stances to take root, and will benefit teachers and students of economics alike.

### **Holistic Approaches to Purpose and Social Studies**

Ayers (2016) posits an interdisciplinary emphasis as a remedy to the persistent lack of economics integration in social studies methods classes (S. Miller & VanFossen, 2008), in keeping with the general emphasis on interdisciplinary social studies in the C3 Framework for Social Studies (National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), 2013). Additionally, for preservice teachers to fully implement a transformational purpose into their eventual teaching practice, their teacher education program must consistently foster political and ideological clarity (Bartolomé, 2004), critique official knowledge (Apple, 2000), and introduce subjugated knowledge (Blevins & Talbert, 2015) throughout the teacher education program. Preservice teachers, therefore, must have opportunities to effectively implement an economics pedagogy that aligns with their purpose for teaching and reasons for teaching social studies. A holistic approach to economics would include its integration into various interdisciplinary approaches to social studies, as well as its integration into transformative teacher education practices.

Economics plays a vital role for analyzing society in the present, and is important to understanding past injustices and developing a plan for action that will address inequality. Likewise, a counter-hegemonic stance benefits from economic integration as part of a broader effort to promote humanizing education. The explicit modeling of

economic methods that specifically address the ways in which economics is conceptually misaligned with social studies purpose and teacher instructional decisions is an ideal way to bring about social studies pedagogy that fulfils a transformative purpose and makes use of the full breadth of social studies disciplines.

### **An Economic Counternarrative**

The neoclassical dominant narrative in economics conceptualizes man as an atomistic, rational, utility maximizer (Graupe, 2012; Lutz & Lux, 1988). It enshrines markets as the ideal coordinator of human activity (Rosenbaum, 2000; Williamson, 1985). It denies the history of thought in the discipline and the role of history in market conditions (Bögenhold, 2010; John King, 2012; Peart & Levy, 2005). It promotes neoliberal policies (Wright-Maley & Davis, 2017b) and denounces the role of government and it all too often denies entrenched forces of racism, classism, and patriarchy (Feiner, 1994; Weiner & Roberts, 1990). For economics education to fit a transformative teacher purpose, future teachers must be exposed to an economic counternarrative that is purposeful and persistent.

The particular areas in which preservice teachers' ideas about and implementation of economic curriculum deviated from their purpose for teaching and teaching social studies inform the way that this counternarrative should proceed. One, *reflection-in* and – *on-action* (Schön, 1983) that also includes a consideration of the social context surrounding students and their specific needs is a vital doorway to a critical economic counternarrative. Reflecting on student backgrounds, culture, and sociopolitical context

will not only lead to a more relevant curriculum, but can facilitate a critique of the traditional neoclassical model's inadequacy to speak to students' lives. Two, this explicit critique can become the foundation for classroom practice, thereby allowing teachers to maintain fidelity to required curriculum while offering a more humanizing approach to economic education. And three, teachers and students should explore transformative economic action as a way to achieve meaningful *praxis* (Freire, 1993) within their economic classrooms and communities. This means subverting neoclassical emphases on profit and individual success (L. Saunders, 2017) and considering the way communal forms of economic activity can benefit those who have been marginalized by neoliberal policies predicated on neoclassical values (Moll et al., 1992; Ostrom, 2015).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The themes, findings, and implications that arise from this study's research questions suggest the following recommendations for social studies educators and teacher educators. One, for economics curriculum and pedagogy to address dominant themes of the era and to align with reasons for teaching and teaching social studies, there must be an alignment of critical pedagogy. Practical theories must be integrated with social analysis, reflection should address classroom practice, and praxis should evolve from a counterhegemonic stance. Two, for teacher educators to prepare preservice teachers with limited familiarity with traditional economic content to teach critical economics, they must expose the dominant narrative in economics, explicitly support preservice teachers'

purpose, and reframe content knowledge to more acutely conform to the lived experiences of preservice teachers and their students.

## **Purpose and Critical Pedagogy in Economics**

### ***Aligning Practical Theories and Social Analysis***

Teachers' practical theories include their experiences, the knowledge that they have constructed, and their values (Handel & Lauvas, 1987; Zeichner & Liston, 2013). For economics education to begin to address the dominant themes of the era (Freire, 2005a), these practical theories must begin to align with the critical pedagogical tenet of *social analysis* (Kincheloe, 2008). This means that teachers of economics must use their lived experiences to shine a light on the way that institutions maintain power (Giroux, 2011). Importantly, economics as a discipline can be both a lens to explore these power dynamics and an institution itself that has enforced certain power relationships that have been detrimental to equality (Arestis, Charles, & Fontana, 2014; Bowles & Gintis, 2011; Earle et al., 2016; Feiner & Roberts, 1990; Ferber & Nelson, 2003). Teachers should also explicitly interrogate their understanding of economics, and determine how their background has been shaped by institutional economic structures (Shanks, 2016). Finally, economics can marry social analysis and values by explicitly stating ideal economic conditions, and researching how far those conditions are from reality (Norton & Ariely, 2011; Sober Giecek, 2007). Using lived experiences, constructed knowledge, and values to open up society to economic critique is an important first step towards a more critical economic narrative, but the classroom must also be a space where teachers reflect on

their students' lives and use that reflection to conduct a more humanizing economic education practice.

### ***Aligning Reflection and Classroom Practice***

Schön's (1983) conception of *reflection-on-action* and *reflection-in-action* allow teachers to develop their purpose (Zeichner & Liston, 2013), but that reflection include an analysis of the way reflection is socially and discursively mediated (Day, 1993; Segall & Gaudelli, 2007) and it must attend to student curiosity and interests if it is to be transformative in nature (Freire, 2005b). Therefore, classroom practice must become dialogical (Freire, 1993, 2005a) and build on an ethnographically informed understanding of students' knowledge and values (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). In terms of economic education, this means that teachers' instructional practices should be informed by reflection that seeks to better understand the way that economics functions in their students' community (L. King & Finley, 2015). It also means that teachers have a responsibility to explore the economic knowledge their students bring to the table, rather than assume limited economic literacy as has been asserted by several analyses of standardized test data (Walstad & Rebeck, 2001; Walstad & Soper, 1988). A dialogic economic classroom would appreciate students' economic experiences and consider ways to address economic injustice in the surrounding community. This reflective exploration should set the stage for action in a way that addresses hegemonic forces that maintain injustice.



### ***Aligning Counter-Hegemonic Stance and Praxis***

Bartolomé (2004) writes that prospective teachers must “examine the political and cultural role that counter-hegemonic resistance can serve to contest and transform the exclusionary, harmful, and fundamentally undemocratic values and beliefs that inform dominant educational practices in the United States” (p. 98). This imperative is vital to a critical economic pedagogy, and must take the form of *praxis*, or “reflective action that intervenes in a social context, necessarily transforming it” (De Lissovoy, 2008, p. 129) through the disciplinary tools and structures of economics.

### **Economics Teacher Education**

#### ***Exposing the Neoclassical Dominant Narrative***

Teacher educators must use their limited time in social studies methods courses (Joshi & Marri, 2006) to address the prevailing dominant narrative in economics. Neoclassical economics inhibits critical economic pedagogy by enforcing a rigid conceptualization of economic knowledge that is technical, abstract, and individualistic. It enforces boundaries that deny opportunities for a holistic approach to social studies, and informs a view of economic action that is exclusively about promoting neoliberal policies. Therefore, if teacher educators wish to attend to a more critical vision of teacher preparation in social studies, they must emphasize a counter narrative that offers different ways of thinking about the purpose of economics, economic knowledge, and economic action.

### ***Supporting Critical Purpose***

It is vital that social studies teacher educators attend to the way in which their preservice teachers describe their purpose for teaching, their ideals about social studies, and the way that economics education is implicated in these areas. The work of transformation-based teacher education is difficult (Blevins & Talbert, 2015), but ignoring or avoiding the challenges presented by economics as a component of social studies is to ignore and avoid the opportunities that economics offers as part of a broader emphasis on critical theory in the social studies (Shanks, 2017). Additionally, it is incumbent upon teacher educators to consider the ways in which purpose for teaching and reasons for teaching social studies are misaligned, and offer specific training in methods that address these gaps.

### ***Reframing Content Knowledge***

Finally, social studies teacher educators must reframe their understanding of content knowledge in economics in order to avoid the persistent deficit view of preservice teachers' economic content knowledge. Every preservice teacher that passes through the doors of a teacher education program has experienced economic privilege and oppression in some form. Every preservice teacher has experienced an educational system designed to prepare them for existing economic roles (Bowles & Gintis, 2011). Every preservice teacher has lived in a country where race, class, and gender have tremendous consequences for economic outcomes. Therefore, the emphasis in social studies methods classes should be less about 'banking' more economic content according to some set of adopted standards, but instead should emphasize the excavation of critical

economic knowledge based on the experiences of preservice teachers, their students, and a communal reading of the world entire.

## **LIMITATIONS**

As with any study, the data, analysis, and conclusions of this study are limited by several factors. The first is the scant time that was available to collect data and observe teaching during the Discovery experience. The Summer was an ideal time to consider the way that preservice teachers thought about teaching, social studies, and economics as they began their preparation, as well as the opportunity to observe them plan and teach lessons without the potential restrictions of a more traditional school placement with the inherent influence of the mentor teacher and other contextual restraints. That said, the summer was an exceptionally busy time for these preservice teachers and therefore, the interviews, observation and artifact data were limited by the need to collect data over a shorter time period than may otherwise have been desirable.

Likewise, the collection of data at the outset of the teacher preparation program meant that the data for this study represent the nascent understandings, ideals, and values of these preservice teachers and therefore have little to say about how experiences in school settings and deeper explorations of social studies content and methods might have altered or extended their responses. Specifically, these preservice teachers did not take a social studies methods course until the fall, and did not spend a full semester in the classroom until the spring. While some data was collected in the fall semester during the methods course, data collected at the end of the year that included multiple social studies

courses and extensive time in local classrooms would certainly reveal different interpretations than data collected at the beginning.

Additionally, this study did not attempt to explore the intersections of identity that may have affected the way that preservice teachers expressed their purpose for teaching, their reasons for teaching social studies, and their conceptualization of the utility of economics therein. The complexities certainly affect all of these elements, and the way that they are put into practice through instructional decisions, yet by employing a case study methodology that emphasized the components of the case that made it a “a specific, unique, bounded system” (Stake, as cited in Mertens, 2015, p. 245), the analysis of the data precluded an exploration of the manifestation of these intersections of identity.

Finally, this study was both enhanced and limited by the significant influence that the researcher had within the teacher preparation program. Described in detail in Chapter 3, the author of this study was at various times a mentor, field supervisor, instructor, teaching assistant, confidant, and friend to the participants in this study which may have influenced both the willingness of these preservice teachers to participate in the study and their ultimate responses. While every effort was made to allow the study to operate independent of the preparation program, and to not alter the overall content or practices of the program, the existence of the study was a departure from baseline requirements.

#### **DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Economics education is a vital tool for exposing the structures of power in society. It offers a language of power to allow students and teachers to describe their

existing reality, and it offers ideas and tools to alter that reality in pursuit of justice. Unfortunately, economics education as it is currently practiced is largely devoid of these pursuits. It is constrained by the neoclassical paradigm (R. Miller, 1993) and limited by a lack of attention within the field of social studies education (S. Miller & VanFossen, 2008). This study fulfills elements of these economic affordances and highlights some of these constraints, but there are a number of extensions of the themes of this study that could go further to promoting a more humanizing vision of economics. My own purpose for teaching and my ideals for social studies education require this vision of economics to move forward, and I intend to do so along the following lines of inquiry.

While the implications and recommendations of this project promote an appreciative stance toward economic content knowledge among social studies teachers, there is still work to be done to isolate and analyze the specific forms of critical content knowledge that allow teachers to work within the extant restrictions of the formal economics curriculum. What neoclassical concepts can show the deleterious effect of red-lining and other racist housing policies throughout the twentieth century? What economic impact do these policies have today? What are the economic ramifications of the gender wage gap? What policies might address this injustice? How much wealth is in the hands of the richest one percent? How extensive is extreme poverty? What redistributive policies could address this staggering imbalance? By studying specific neoclassical concepts and their utility to expose the structural inequality enforced by white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism, teachers may be able to use the master's tools, as it were, to expose systemic injustice.

The master's tools, however, will never dismantle the master's house (Lorde, 1983), and thus there is a need for research that explicitly critiques the neoclassical narrative and offers pluralist alternatives. There is a wide array of opportunities to clarify and extend the counternarrative offered throughout this dissertation. This would involve exploring the way that teachers think about several fundamental components of the dominant narrative and analyses of specific attempts to counter this narrative. What do teachers think about the framing of 'economic man' in neoclassical economics? How would they implement feminist perspectives on the nature of humans in their classrooms? What can storytelling offer as a counternarrative for teachers and students? When are Marxist perspectives most valuable in an economics class? In what ways might behavioral economics help teachers and students better understand their world? What new ways of thinking about the world economically might merge a number of alternative paradigms into a more humanizing economics pedagogy? The explicit critique of the neoclassical narrative and the strategic development of a pluralist counternarrative will enable more students and teachers to see themselves in economics and begin to deconstruct the oppressive conditions made possible by the overwhelming adherence to neoclassicism.

#### **A FINAL EPIGRAPH AND CONCLUDING THOUGHT**

The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love . . . Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to others . . .

*Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Paulo Freire*

I read the above words more than a decade ago, in the first class where I seriously considered the political implications of education and came to the realization that education cannot be a neutral enterprise. I continue to grapple with what these words mean for me, my life, and the world around me. In this project I have attempted to name the world in conjunction with the participants of the study and the people that have guided me throughout. I believe we have engaged in creation and re-creation of ideas and action, and I would be remiss if I did not end this writing with an expression of my love for everyone involved in this project. The courage and commitment that all involved demonstrated should stand as testament to the power of a dedicated few who are united in pursuit of a transformative goal. In whatever capacity I am able, I hope to replicate the faith, hope, humility, and love that they have enacted. I hope also, that those who encounter this work will proceed accordingly. Peace.

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